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THE PROOFS, NATURE, AND EXTENT

OF

INSPIRATION.

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THE PROOFS, NATURE, AND EXTENT

OF

INSPIRATION,

AND INTO

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

BY THE

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OXFORD,

PRINTED BY W. BAXTER,

FOR B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET, LONDON;

AND J. PARKER, OXFORD.

1831.

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INTRODUCTION.

INSPIRATION is confessedly a difficult subject; but, much of the difficulty that perplexes it is often of our own making. Never, perhaps, did a sincere, humble-minded Christian, studying the inspired character of Scripture and of the divine agents with no further design than to ascertain whether he has a safe rule of faith and of conduct, fail of comprehending at least enough of the subject for his purpose. Many however enter on the inquiry, not so much with a view to determine the standard of their belief and practice, as to elicit abstract principles of inspiration. Many come, in short, to the oracles of the Most High, not to consult them, but to pry into them—to discover the process and machinery, as it were, by means of which those oracles have been obtained and issued; and such a speculative

research affords ample room, we all know, for doubt, contrariety of opinion, and even scepticism about the very existence of inspiration.

It is thus that some refuse to recognise any inspiration of the New-Testament-Scriptures, excepting for the single assertion that Jesus is the Christ. Others again, excluding all the historical portions of the Bible, would limit the sacred character to its doctrinal assertions. It is maintained by some, and denied by others, that inspiration extends to physical facts—to notices respecting profane history—to the style and composition. According to some, the whole of Scripture, matter and language, must be alike of divine authorship; whilst others find no difficulty in supposing, that God might have committed his extraordinary agency altogether to the uncontrolled and unassisted registry of fallible men.

Nor are the views entertained commonly about the Holy Spirit's influence on the lives and conduct of Christians less various and conflicting. On the one hand, we meet with the most confident assertions of a sensible perception of the workings of that Divine Person on the heart of Christians now; as if there existed no mark of

distinction between this his abiding presence, and the inspiration of apostles and prophets—in other words, as if the *temporary* provisions of the Almighty for *attesting* his intercourse with men, had no characteristic whereby they might be known from the *permanent* provision for our *sanctification* and *spiritual help*. On the other hand many go into an opposite extreme of denying, or (what amounts to the same) of excluding from their calculations about conduct, all view whatever of any immediate and actual interference of the Holy Spirit.

When we reflect on the immense importance of the question at issue—on the place which the doctrine of inspiration occupies in the Christian Religion, and the extent to which our whole view of Revelation must be affected by the notions we form on this subject—such a chaos of opinion, under any circumstances, and at any time, would be a matter of serious consideration. But the aspect of the present times renders it peculiarly so ; and forces the consequences irresistibly on the attention of every reflecting Christian. It is amidst this discordance of doctrine about the foundation principle of all revealed Religion, that a vast and

momentous moral crisis is rapidly approaching—the rise of Education throughout the mass of the People. Amidst pretensions to sensible spiritual communion on the one hand, and a careful avoidance of recognising any divine interposition on the other—amidst theories invented or imported, that would subject the sacred volume to the rules of mere ordinary criticism, opposed only in partial and personal controversy—a large portion of the community, which has been hitherto uneducated, is suddenly roused into free inquiry, and furnished with ability to perceive all that darkens and deforms the subject; but—it must be owned and lamented—not furnished with that spiritual training, which alone enables the inquirer to see his way through it.

It is not that the people at large are without any religious and moral instruction—it is not that they have *absolutely* less now than heretofore—they have probably more. But the progress of spiritual and worldly knowledge is unequal; and it is this inequality of progress that constitutes the danger. It is a truth which cannot be too strongly insisted on, that if the powers of the intellect be strengthened by the acquisi-

tion of science, professional learning, or general literature—in short, secular knowledge, of whatever kind, without being *proportionately* exercised on spiritual subjects, its susceptibility of the objections which may be urged against Revelation will be increased, without a corresponding increase in the ability to remove them. Conscious of having mastered certain difficulties that attach to subjects which he has studied, one so educated finds it impossible to satisfy himself about difficulties in Revelation; Revelation not having received from him the same degree of attention; and, forgetful of the unequal distribution of his studies, charges the fault on the subject. Doubt, discontent, and contemptuous infidelity, (more frequently secret than avowed,) are no unusual results. It seems indeed to have been required of us by the Author of Revelation, that his Word should have *a due share* of our intellect, as well as of our heart; and that the disproportionate direction of our talents, no less than of our affections, to the things of this world, should disqualify us for faith. What is sufficient sacred knowledge for an uneducated person, becomes inadequate for him when educated; even as he would be

crippled and deformed, if the limb which was strong and well-proportioned when he was a child, should have undergone no progressive change as his bodily stature increased, and he grew into manhood. We must not think to satisfy the divine law, by setting apart the same absolute amount as the tithe of our enlarged understanding, which was due from a narrower and more barren field of intellectual culture.

Nor let it be imagined that this is true only of minds highly gifted, and accomplished in science, elegant literature, or professional pursuits. It is not the *absolute* amount of worldly acquirements, but the proportion that they bear to our religious attainments, be these what they may, that is to be dreaded. If the *balance* of intellectual exercise be not preserved, the almost certain result will be, either an utter indifference to religion; or else, that slow-corroding scepticism, which is fostered by the consciousness, that difficulties corresponding to those that continue to perplex our view of Revelation have, in our other pursuits, been long surmounted and removed.

Inspiration is one of the topics peculiarly exposed to this unfair treatment. The whole ques-

tion is one concerning facts and views altogether out of the ordinary course of nature and of human affairs; and the conclusions we arrive at must of course present some few revolting difficulties to a mind that has been thus partially and irregularly trained; a mind that has been accustomed to dwell, either exclusively or immoderately, on natural causes and effects. "The natural man" (as Paul declares) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned[a]." And this remark of the apostle does not rest merely on his authority: even one who should deny him any, nay one who should deny Revelation, must admit, that *if there were* things of the Spirit of God, the natural man was not qualified to receive and know them.

To provide such arguments, therefore, or to place the subject in such a point of view, as should secure it a fair examination from all, notwithstanding such impediments, is perhaps impracticable; and has certainly not been contemplated in the present undertaking. At the same time, there are many persons, on whom the

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

reasoning commonly employed in treating of inspiration, and the display of its claims, would make their due impression; but for the want of certain links to connect these theological disquisitions with their ordinary habits of thinking and of satisfying their minds on other subjects. To obviate this difficulty has been my aim; and I have accordingly endeavoured rather to give a survey of the mode in which the subject may be investigated, and of the light in which it should be considered, than a detail of all the arguments and views which it involves.

The leading questions respecting Inspiration are those which relate, first, to the proofs by which it is, in any case, to be established; secondly, to the nature and extent of its operation; and thirdly, to the authority which is claimed for it. In this order these several points will be examined.

PART I.

PROOFS OF INSPIRATION.

§. 1. *Proofs requisite for establishing an inspiration of persons.*

IN the case of a person claiming to be commissioned with a message from God, the only proof which ought to be admitted, is miraculous attestation of some sort. It should be required that either the person himself should work a miracle, or that a miracle should be so wrought in connection with his ministry, as to remove all doubt of its reference to him and his message.

The miracle, in these cases, is, in fact, a *specimen* of that violation of the ordinary course of nature, which the person inspired is asserting to have taken place in his appointment and ministry; and corresponds to the exhibition of *specimens* and *experiments*, which we should require of a geologist, mineralogist, or chemist, if he as-

serted his discovery of any natural phænomena—especially of any at variance with received theories. In this latter case it would be not only reasonable to require such sensible proof, but it would be unreasonable to admit the assertion without it—without seeing the experiment or specimen ourselves, or, satisfying ourselves, on the testimony of credible witnesses, that it had been seen by others. Equally unreasonable would it be to admit any person's claim to inspiration, or extraordinary communion with God, without the appropriate test—the "*earnest* of the Spirit[a]."

Accordingly, a careful inspection of the records of Revelation will satisfy the inquirer, that God has never, in any age, required credence for his messengers, without first investing them with miraculous credentials—providing them with *specimens*, as it were, of that extraordinary divine agency, concerning which they were commissioned to make report to mankind. Moses, the

[a] 2 Cor. i. 22. The expression, which signifies part of a sum of money paid down as a *pledge* that the rest is forthcoming; is repeated in chap. v. 5. and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, i. 14.

Prophets, our Saviour and his Apostles, all rested their claim to a heavenly commission on the miracles which they performed. "I have greater witness," said our Lord to the Jews, "than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me[b];" and again, on another occasion, "the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me[c];" "if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him[d]:" and lastly, when speaking of their guilt in rejecting his claim, "if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin[e]." St. Paul accordingly represents him as "declared to be the Son of God with power[f]," and always appeals for the reality of his own apostleship to the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power[g]." The same remark applies to Moses, and to those whom God raised

[b] John v. 36. [c] John x. 25. [d] John x. 37, 38.
[e] John xv. 24. [f] Rom. i. 4. [g] 1 Cor. ii. 4.

up after him for the guidance and instruction of the Israelites; in short, to all his inspired ministers.

There is indeed one passage in Scripture apparently inconsistent with this view; but so far from being really so, it furnishes, when examined, the strongest confirmation of it. "If there arise among you (declares the law of Moses) a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul[h]." It might seem then from these words, that the prophet's doctrine was to be the test of the sign coming from God, not the sign the test of the doctrine being from God. But a very little reflection enables us to explain this. That Israel was to worship Jehovah, and Him alone, was the main principle of the Mosaic Law; and the divine authority of

[h] Deut. xiii. 1—3.

this great commandment had been proved, and impressed on the whole people, by a series of public miracles and national interpositions. It was to keep up the habitual impression of this evidence, and the eminent importance of the point attested by it, that the warning was given. The Israelites were reminded that it could not be God's miracle, if it were wrought for the purpose of contradicting that which God had established by so many awful signs and wonders; and that if supernatural agency ever were exhibited for this purpose, it could only be permitted by God as a trial of their faith in that evidence on which the Law rested[i]. On the same principle, it would seem, our Saviour warned his disciples against certain pretenders who were to arise, and work signs and wonders indeed; but as these signs were to be given in confirmation of assertions opposed

[i] This will account for the fact, that the Jews admitted the reality of Christ's miracles, and yet disbelieved his assertions. They regarded his case as coming under this provision of their Law, and rested their decision against him, on the charge that his doctrine was opposed to that of Moses. "We are Moses disciples, we know that God spake unto Moses." John ix. 28, 29.

to his, they could not come from the same source as his own miracles[k]. Hence too he gives them the general rule respecting all pretenders, "by their fruits ye shall know them[l]." St. Paul, in like manner, tells the Galatians[m], that if he himself—if an angel from heaven, were to preach to them a different doctrine from that which he had already preached, they were to hold him accursed. It could not be God's message, it could not be God's miracle, if it contradicted assertions which God had already confirmed by miracle.

This careful inculcation then of a principle, which throughout God's extraordinary dealings with mankind enabled all to distinguish between

[k] Matt. xxiv. 23, 24. Mark xiii. 21, 22.

[l] Matt. vii. 15, 16. To this rule St. John seems to be referring in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come."

[m] Gal. i. 8.

the testimonial miracles of his messengers, and those of impostors, is of itself the strongest argument that the claim to inspiration and the performance of miracles always went together. Belief indeed built on any other foundation would have been credulity; and to suppose such belief required and commended, would be to suppose that the weakest minds and the most ready to yield to every new impression, were the most eminent for faith.

Miracle, it is to be further observed, must have been requisite, not only to obtain credence from others to the assertion of one inspired, that he was under the extraordinary guidance of God's Spirit; but also *to assure the person himself*, that this was so. How else indeed could Moses or Isaiah or Paul have been sure that they were authorized to speak as the oracles of the Most High? How else could they have satisfied themselves that the revealing voice was not some imposition practised on them? that the holy dream or vision was not the natural results of a disordered mind or body? that the impression of a divine call to perform miracles and to do God's errand, was

more than high wrought enthusiasm and zeal for his honour?

In truth, so far was the call from always finding the chosen servant ready to anticipate and welcome it, that history represents many, slow to believe themselves called, demanding of the Lord the fullest miraculous asurance of his appointment, and having their request granted. Thus, in the account of Gideon's extraordinary commission to deliver the Israelites from the army of the Midianites, the Spirit of the Lord is said to have come upon him; "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl-full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground

let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground[n]." The reluctance of Moses again to believe that he would be inspired with eloquence, even after his power to work signs and wonders had been proved to him by the conversion of his rod into a serpent and the infliction and removal of leprosy, is an instance in which it was even carried to an unreasonable extent, inasmuch as it called forth the expression of divine displeasure[o].

[n] Judges vi. 36—40.

[o] Exod. iv. Whether Zacharias's requisition of a sign from the angel who announced to him the future birth of the Baptist, was of this character also, may be doubted. It was evidently not considered so unreasonable as to be refused; and yet the angel's words seem to imply that he ought not to have needed the proof, although it was granted. All that he was commissioned to do in consequence of his vision was to call the child's name John; and the birth of the child, under the existing circumstances, would have been sufficient assurance that the prediction was miraculous, and his commission therefore from God. It was probably then for desiring an earlier sign than was necessary—for being unwilling to wait in humble suspense for the appropriate sign—that an apparent reproof accompanied the miraculous suspension of his speech. See Luke, chap. i.

At the same time, it must not be expected, that in all the recorded instances of extraordinary commissions, we should find mention made of the inspired person receiving the miraculous sign of his appointment. It was doubtless only recorded when there was something remarkable about it; and for the very reason that it was an established and understood feature of the divine agency, it was otherwise omitted in the narrative. The tenor of Scripture however implies it; and the reasonableness and necessity of the provision is such, as would have entitled us, even on less warrant from Scripture than we have, to assert, that no inspired messenger was ever left to infer his inspiration from the doubtful suggestion of his own feelings.

Both in the case of the person inspired, and of him who is called upon to believe in his inspiration, miraculous evidence will not indeed be superseded by any antecedent probability there may be of divine interposition, but will by that be naturally and fairly the more entitled to examination. On the supposition, for instance, that it was by God's directions that the Israelites

were led into a desert and barren wilderness, which of itself could not support them; the miracles of manna and quails which then attested the divine legation of Moses, are such as we should antecedently expect; and we therefore listen to the testimony on which they rest with less previous suspicion, than we should, if we were told that the Israelites had been supported miraculously after they were in possession of the promised land. The claims again of Jesus to be the Messiah, ought not, indeed, under any circumstances, to have been admitted, unless he had performed testimonial miracles; but the claim which his miracles had to attention and candid examination, nay, to an anticipation of their reality, depended on his coming at the time, and under the circumstances, foreshewn by the prophets. The same miracles wrought by the same person (the case of course is a supposed one) either a hundred years earlier, or a hundred years later, would, if known indeed, have *forced* assent to his assertions; but men would have been justified in refusing to examine the evidence for them. It is well known that the Jews did find a plea that satisfied many who rejected those miracles, in

the supposed inconsistency between their own anticipations of the fulfilment of prophecy, and our Lord's disavowal of a kingly character: and it is evident that they were wrong in so interpreting the prophecy; but not in suspecting the divine character of his miracles, supposing those prophecies to have been rightly interpreted.

The true value of this *a priori* proof, as it is sometimes called, should be always accurately estimated. It does not supersede the test of miracles, but it makes the difference of miraculous pretensions being examined with suspicion or with favour—of their deserving or not a careful examination. If we contrast, accordingly, the real testimonial miracles wrought by our Lord and his apostles, with the pretended miracles of the Popish saints which are appealed to in attestation of their extraordinary communion with God, we come to the inquiry, fairly and properly, with a presumption against the latter, and in favour of the former—we have more objections to be removed before we could be satisfied of the latter, than stand in the way in the former case.

When therefore in the present day, under circumstances that at least do not warrant us to anticipate manifestations of the Spirit, we find persons regulating their lives and resting their hopes of eternal life on sensations and *experiences* as they are termed—making these the index of the presence or the abandonment of the Holy Spirit;—they should be reminded, that one thing is yet wanting to make their trust accord with the faith of apostles and prophets—*the perception of a sensible miracle.* To persuade another to act from their suggestions, on the ground that one result of such experiences is a more than ordinary knowledge of God's will, a sensible miracle ought to be wrought for that person's satisfaction; but for the assurance of those themselves who experience these sensations, a testimonial miracle is no less requisite. What was necessary, when Moses, the prophets, and the apostles enjoyed extraordinary communion with God, cannot have been rendered less necessary by any change that has since taken place. I waive, for the present, the question, whether it is accordant with the character of Christianity, considered as the final dispensation, that *any* extraordinary

interposition should now be displayed; but clearly, if this be ever the case, it cannot be left questionable—it must be in every instance either miraculously proved, or else it must be false.

Is there then, I may be asked, no interposition of God's Holy Spirit, suggesting good and repelling evil; rescuing men from the influence of sin, and guiding them to repentance and holiness of life? Are there no longer any miracles of grace? I do not say this: but, that no sensible evidence accompanies such divine agency, so that we can distinguish it from the workings of our own minds. It should be observed too, (although it is a mere verbal question,) that the spiritual interposition itself, being now the result of an established law of Providence, is no longer properly a miracle; but if we choose to consider it as such, on the ground that it is an alteration of man's original condition; it is, at all events, no perceptible miracle. It never was, as far as we know, a perceptible miracle. Sensible *proof* was granted, in the first establishment of Christianity, to assure the Church of this spiritual assistance; and the reality of this being once so proved, and impressed generally on the Church, there was

no need that the proof shall be continued and perpetually renewed. We are still however compelled to believe, on that same evidence, in the interposition of the Holy Ghost, and to act on the ground of really receiving the benefit of it.

It is much to be feared, however, that many, disgusted at the claims which are made to *sensible* interposition, do practically discard all view of a *real* divine interference; that is, allow it little or no consideration in their plan of conduct. Now to acknowledge the Holy Spirit's assistance in general terms, and yet to allow this belief no influence on any particular actions, is virtually to renounce it, as far as it is a practical principle[p]. If it be *the sensible evidence* and perception of spiritual assistance that are withdrawn and not *the agency itself*, are we not failing to exercise that lively faith, that habitual confidence in divine power, which is declared in Scripture to be requisite, for the ordinary no less than for the extraordinary divine agency to be accomplished in us? This is no abstract question of

[p] See Whately's Ninth Essay on the Difficulties of St. Paul, where many of the topics belonging to this section will be found more fully discussed.

curious and refined theology. It is a question about our daily and hourly wants—our ability to do good and to abstain from evil—our being present with or absent from the Lord—our discipleship to him. Do we regard our discipleship to *him* now as a mere figure of language? Are we content to think that he is no Immanuel to us—that he has risen from the grave, and gone whither we cannot follow him? Must disciple after disciple still be heard to say, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe?" O no! Hear the answer which he makes us, "Be not faithless, but believing"—"blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Never let us wait to have the rebuke of Thomas repeated to each one of us separately—and it may be when it is too late for *us* to profit by it; let us at once exclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

One point more requires to be noticed. The above statements may seem to some to need being reconciled with our Lord's own account of

the Holy Spirit, and its operation on our hearts. He illustrates it by the unseen wind, which we recognise by its effects on the smoke, and other objects that yield to it[q]; and hence it may be inferred, that we are to regard "the fruits of the Spirit[r]," (as the apostle terms the conduct influenced by the Spirit,) the appropriate evidence of divine interposition. It is plain, however, that in whatever way good conduct is a test of divine influence, it cannot be intended as a test of the same sort as the testimonial miracles of speaking a foreign language, healing, and the like; for then there would have been no need to superadd these. The lives of the disciples would have been the evidence to which appeal would have been made. The moral and religious fruits of a holy life undoubtedly are a test of "God working within us," and a very important one; but it is distinguished from the other in two respects. I. Miracles were exhibited to prove, not the successful use of spiritual help, but the grant of it by God; whereas the test arising from good moral conduct, supposes the grant of assistance to be proved and known, and only applies to the

[q] John iii. 8. [r] Gal. v. 22.

successful use of it. II. Again, miracles are to be employed as *positive* proof of the existence of spiritual influence; but the only certain application of good conduct in evidence of the *existence* of spiritual influence, is as a *negative* proof. In the absence of good works, we are sure that the Spirit has not operated on our hearts; but a correct outward behaviour does not at once imply, that it has proceeded from this spiritual assistance which the Christian enjoys by covenant. Its application as a test, therefore, is plainly of a very different kind, and for a different purpose, from the use we make of testimonial miracles; which are, therefore, the appropriate and the only evidence, to us as well as to the Apostolic Church, of the covenanted interposition of the Holy Spirit, for our sanctification, and moral strength and comfort.

§. 2. *Proofs requisite for establishing an inspiration of Scripture.*

The writing of Scripture is only one of the many kinds of agency for which the servants of the Most High have at different periods been

inspired. The Bible is said to be *inspired*, in no other sense than the government of the Israelites might be termed inspired—that is, the *persons* who wrote the Bible, and those who were appointed to govern God's people of old, were divinely commissioned and miraculously qualified, so far as was needful, for their respective employments.

This being so, the inspiration of Scripture is not, by the strict rule of division, opposed to the inspiration of persons ; but forms one branch of that multifarious ministry in which those persons were engaged. It is nevertheless convenient to distinguish it, as I have done, from all other inspired agency, in examining the nature of the proofs on which it rests : and this for two reasons. I. It comprises that portion of the sacred ministry which is permanent, and is addressed immediately and especially to us. The acts and preaching of prophets, apostles, and other extraordinary dispensers of God's word, constituted their ministry to those of their own age ; their writings form their ministry to us also and to all ages. II. Scripture contains the only authentic record of all other inspired agency ; and thus

becomes the channel through which all other is proved. It is the more important too to observe this distinction; because the inspiration of the author in writing, is liable to be confounded, in the reader's view, with the inspiration of those whose acts he is recording: and this especially, if the writer was himself an actor in the scenes he has narrated. The questions, for example, which relate to the inspiration of the Pentateuch, and of Moses performing the part which is ascribed to him in that portion of Scripture, are quite distinct.

The proof requisite for establishing the divine authority of any writings, when (as in the case of the Bible) the testimonial miracles of the authors can be no longer witnessed, is either, I. That some miracle be implied in the authorship; or, II. That there be satisfactory testimony that the writers were persons who performed miracles; or, III. That there be satisfactory testimony, that the writings were recognised as works of inspiration, by persons who must have been assured of this on the evidence of miracles.

In the application of these positive proofs, the question of antecedent probability is, of course,

no less important than when inspiration is claimed for a living person. This *a priori* presumption is in the case of Scripture very strong; and the inquirer who has not estimated its force, does not deal fairly with the testimony to miracles. That God should have committed his Revelations (supposing Him to have made any) to the uncertain channel of oral tradition, or uninspired record, is, of itself, a monstrous supposition. If we grant that Revelation exists, we may reasonably expect to find its truths preserved certainly and infallibly somewhere. The Roman Catholics insist much on this view; and urge it in favour of the claims of Papal infallibility. And undoubtedly they are right so far, that the antecedent probability of an infallible guide, should lead us to examine well the claims of any authority which pretends to be that guide. They claim the benefit of this antecedent probability, and they should be allowed it. Only let us carefully remember what the use and value of it is—it *recommends to our notice the appropriate proof, and that proof is miracle.* Let each successive Pope perform sensible testimonial miracles; and then there may be a question, whether he, or Scripture, or both,

be infallible. It is antecedently probable, nay certain, that Revelation would be left infallibly to be communicated to all in every age. This does not *prove* that Scripture is that infallible medium of Revelation, any more than it proves the Pope to be; but it recommends to our notice the miraculous evidence that exists for the one, and does not for the other.

§. 3. *External proofs of Scriptural inspiration.*

It is not my purpose to pursue the details of the argument, by which our Scriptures are either traced to authors who worked testimonial miracles; or else, are shewn to have had their inspiration recognised by persons who must have been satisfied by miraculous evidence; but merely to point out the principles on which this chain of external evidence, as it is called, hangs together. The details, if not already familiar to the reader, will be found in Lardner's Gospel Credibility, Jones's Canon of the New Testament, and other works of easy access to all. The course of argument usually pursued amounts to this.

The primitive Church was assured of the inspiration of our Scriptures by the miracles of those who wrote the New Testament, and bore witness to the Old; and again, by the miracles of those, who, not being themselves authors, yet received and recommended both the Old and New Testament as works of inspiration. To us this proof is conveyed by the intervention of many links of evidence. We first satisfy ourselves, through human testimony of various kinds, that the authors and qualified approvers of Scripture wrought miracles; and so, join the early Church, in admitting the divine authority of the Scriptures on the evidence of these miracles.

This argument, it is plain, is made up of numerous links of proof. It is plain too, that the greater portion of these proofs, we cannot, be we ever so highly-gifted or industrious, examine for ourselves; but must admit them on the authority of others. For example, in order to prove that the Epistle to the Hebrews is an inspired work, we first ascertain, perhaps, that it was known to the Church as the work of Paul the apostle, at a time when the Church was competent to give testi-

mony to the fact; or otherwise, that it was known as the work of an inspired author, whoever he might be, by those who were competent to decide. We further satisfy ourselves, that the Epistle so attested, is the very Epistle which is in our Bible; and, lastly, that it has been so preserved as to escape corruption, or the liability to corruption. Or, suppose that we wished to prove the inspiration of the Book of Chronicles[q]. We should probably first satisfy ourselves that it belonged to one of the three great divisions of the Jewish Scriptures, Law, Prophets, and Psalms, or that it was included under the term Scriptures, when Law, Prophets, and Psalms, or the Scriptures, are asserted to be inspired, and appealed to as such, in the New Testament. Then the inspiration of the New-Testament-Scripture, on whose authority the former argument rests, will require to be proved, by a process similar to that described

[q] I have instanced the mode of proving the inspiration of the Old Testament by the authority of the New; because it appears to be the most direct and satisfactory for one who is only for the first time giving serious attention to the subject; and do not, of course, intend to imply that this is the only method of proof.

in the case of one of the Epistles. Now these several steps in the argument involve each an immense field of inquiry; the results of which can only be furnished by the separate researches of those especially qualified for the task.

It becomes therefore a very serious question, how far these various sources of proof are accessible to the great mass of Christians—to whom they are evidence. The question involves indeed the application of this sort of proof, not as proof of Scriptural Inspiration alone, but of all the facts on which our Religion rests; and is of so great importance, that in attempting to give it a satisfactory answer, I shall not limit my view to the way in which these proofs affect the immediate subject of discussion.

To say, that numerous old manuscripts exist; that they admit of classification and date, and other characteristics; to speak of evidence, derived from contemporary history, from the monuments of art, from national manners and customs; to assert, that there have been persons qualified for the task, who have examined duly these several branches of evidence, and have given a satisfactory report of that research, is to make

a statement concerning the evidence of Christianity, which is intelligible indeed, but is not itself the evidence, not itself the proof, of which you speak. So far from this being the case, we cannot but feel, that the author who is guiding us, and pointing out these pillars of our faith, as they appear engraved on his chart of evidence, can himself, whatever be his learning, be personally acquainted with but a very small portion. The most industrious and able scholar, after spending a life on some individual point of evidence, the collation of manuscripts, the illustrations derived from uninspired authors, translations, or whatever the inquiry be, must, after all, (it would seem,) rest by far the greater part of his faith, immediately on the testimony of others; as thousands in turn will rest their faith on his testimony, to the existence of such proof as he has examined. There is no educated Christian who is not taught to appreciate the force of that proof in favour of the genuineness of the New Testament, which may be derived from the consent of ancient copies, and the quotations found in a long line of fathers, and other writers; and yet not one in a thousand ever reads the works of

the fathers, or sees a manuscript, or is even capable of deciphering one, if presented to him. He admits the very groundwork of his faith on the assertion of those who profess to have ascertained these points; and even the most learned are no further exceptions to this case, than in the particular branch of evidence which they have studied. Nay, even in their use of this, it will be surprising, when we come to reflect on it, how great a portion must be examined, only through statements resting on the testimony of others.

Nor is it a question which can be waived, by throwing the weight of disproof on those who cavil and deny. It turns upon the use which is made, more or less, by all, of the *positive proofs* urged in defence of Christianity. Christianity is established, and it may be fair to bid its assailants prove, that it is not what it professes to be, the presumption and prescriptive title being on its side; but Christianity does not intrench itself within this fortress: it brings out into the field an array of evidences to establish that which, on the former view of the case, its adherents are supposed not to be called on to maintain. It boasts of the sacred volume having been trans-

mitted pure by means of manuscripts; and by asserting the antiquity, the freedom from corruption, and the independence and agreement of the several classes of these, the Christian contends for the existence of his religion at the time when Christ and the apostles lived. Ancient writings are appealed to, and quotations cited by various authors from the New Testament are adduced, which go to prove the same. Even profane history is made to furnish contemporary evidence of the first rise of Christianity. Now it is the way in which this evidence is employed that is the point to be considered; the question is, in what sense all this can be called evidence to the mass of Christians. All this is, in short, *positive proof;* and he who has examined manuscripts, or read the works in question, has gone through the demonstration; but he who has not, (and this is the case with all, making a very few exceptions,) has not gone through the process of proof himself, but takes the conclusion on the word of others. He believes those who inform him, that they, or others, have examined manuscripts, read the fathers, compared profane history with holy writ. Can this be called reasonable faith? or, at least,

do we not pretend to be believing on proofs of various kinds, when, in fact, our belief rests on the bare assertions of others?

It is very important that the case should be set in its true light, because, supposing the Christian ministry able, and at leisure, to investigate and sift the Christian evidence for themselves, the same cannot be done by the barrister, the physician, the professional man of whatever department besides theology, however enabled by education; and then, what is to be the lot of the great mass of the people? They, clearly, are incompetent even to follow up the several steps of proof which each proposition would require. They take it for granted, if they apply the evidence at all, that these things are so, because wiser persons than they say it is so. In the same spirit as the question was put of old, 'Have any of the rulers believed on Christ? but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed,' Christians must generally, it would seem, believe in Christ, because their spiritual rulers do, and reject the infidel's views, because these people are pronounced accursed. Nay, the supposition of the clergy themselves having the qualification,

and the opportunity to go through the process of proof, is only a supposition. They often want either or both, and it is impossible that it should not be so. The labour of a life is scarcely sufficient to examine for one's self one branch alone of such evidence. For the greater part, few men, however learned, have satisfied themselves by going through the proof. They have admitted the main assertions, because proved by others.

And is this conviction then reasonable? Is it more than the adoption of truth on the authority of another? It is. The principle on which all these assertions are received, is not that they have been made by this or that credible individual or body of persons, who have gone through the proof—this may have its weight with the critical and learned—but the main principle adopted by all, intelligible by all, and reasonable in itself, is, that these assertions are set forth, bearing on their face a challenge of refutation. The assertions are like witnesses placed in a box to be confronted. Scepticism, infidelity, and scoffing, form the very groundwork of our faith. As long as these are known to exist and to assail it, so long are we sure that any untenable assertion may and will

be refuted. The benefit accruing to Christianity in this respect from the occasional success of those who have found flaws in the several parts of evidence, is invaluable. We believe what is not disproved most reasonably, because we know that there are those abroad who are doing their utmost to disprove it. We believe the witness, not because we know him and esteem him, but because he is confronted, cross-examined, suspected, and assailed by arts fair and unfair. It is not his authority, but the reasonableness of the case. It becomes conviction well-grounded, and not assent to man's words.

At the same time nothing has perhaps more contributed to perplex the Christian inquirer, than the impression which vague language creates of our conviction arising, not out of the application of this principle to the external and monumental evidences of Christianity, but out of the examination of the evidence itself. The mind feels disappointed and unsatisfied, not because it has not ground for belief, but because it misnames it. The man who has not examined any branch of evidence for himself, may, according to the principle above stated, very reasonably believe in

consequence of it; but his belief does not arise immediately out of it, is not the same frame of mind which would be created by an actual examination for himself. It may be more, or it may be less a sure source of conviction; but the discontent is occasioned, not by this circumstance, but by supposing that it is one of these things that does, or ought to, influence us, when in fact it is the other; by putting ourselves in the attitude of mind which belongs to the witness, instead of that which belongs to the bystander. We very well know how the unbroken testimony of writers during eighteen centuries to the truth of Christianity ought to make us feel, if we had ascertained the fact by an examination of their writings; and we are surprised at finding that we are not in that frame of mind, forgetting that our use of the evidence may be founded on a different principle.

It is partly for this reason, perhaps, that while the external evidences of religion are most set forth as the boast and bulwark of Christianity, it is to the internal that the Christian most appeals in secret for his own satisfaction and bosom-comfort. Here he is at home. In this department his

belief is not indeed more reasonable, but corresponds better to the anticipations he has formed from the character of the evidence. He here has no temptation to confound conviction arising out of one principle, with a state of mind, the existence of which supposes another. He is himself the original inquirer, and goes through the process of actual demonstration, knows how the conclusion ought to affect him, and experiences the anticipated result. He experiences here, what he thinks he ought to feel in regard to the external evidence, only because he has mistaken the real and proper ground of conviction. In the one case he employs a proof which all employ alike; in the other, it is a proof employed in different ways by different persons, and it is by mistaking the use of this latter *to him*, that he is dissatisfied with it. The bookseller and the student may have each the same library; but were the bookseller so unreasonable as to expect the profits of trade to result from his own perusal of his books, or the student to expect learning from selling his, the mistake would be more gross, but not different in kind from the case of our mistaking each his appropriate use of the external evidences of

religion. Of these evidences, some portion, a large portion, every Christian must be content to forego in their primary use—he must be content with the *testimony* that such evidence exists; some must be content, to view the whole of this class of proofs in this way alone.

The more important is it therefore to examine accurately the character of the testimony on which the great superstructure of so much proof is built. Without such an examination, without ascertaining this, our belief in the evidences cannot be said to be reasonable; and it is to the want of acquaintance with this true ground of belief, that much unstable faith, much secret infidelity, perhaps may be traced. While some slight and fly from the consideration of proofs which they cannot themselves examine, to the internal evidence of the Gospel, others are tempted to dismiss the inquiry altogether, or to sit down in cold suspicion of the stability of the boasted structure. The uneducated abandon the topic as beyond them; the educated are led to think that proof which leaves them so much on a level in their use of it with the unlearned cannot bear inspection, or are offended and stumble at a body

of evidence which, in one point of view, requires a research incompatible with the universal claim of faith—the first claim of the Gospel.

And while inquiries of all kinds are daily thrown open to the mass of mankind; while the mechanic and day-labourer are encouraged to acquire the power of examining for themselves, and understanding for themselves, the principles of natural science, and political knowledge, can the foundations of our faith pass unexplored, whether they form a part of the circulated knowledge or not? Whether the inquiry be entered on with the favourable impression which a Christian education gives, or with the spirit of scepticism which marks the rise of national mind beyond its old boundaries and barriers, the ground of our belief in the genuineness and inspiration of the sacred volume will be canvassed, and canvassed by a race of men taught to divest themselves of the technical incumbrances of learning, accustomed to have science and literature levelled to a sort of democratic simplicity, and demanding not only a detail of that evidence which the learned and the professional inquirer can appreciate, but that which is evidence to them. When this shall

be the case, can the risk be small of appealing (as is commonly the case) for proofs of the genuineness and inspiration of the Christian volume, to manuscripts and extracts from fathers and historians, without at the same time carefully pointing out how far, and in what way that evidence is evidence to the inquirer? Can we even now safely, not to say honestly, do so? To minds newly awakened to inquiry, unsatisfactory proof, be it remembered, is not merely idle, but mischievous; it is like a weapon feebly hurled at a reckless intruder, whom you at once provoke and furnish with the means of retaliation. To a mere publication of the evidences of Christianity—to such works as Paley's or Lardner's—will not the mechanic and the labourer of the next generation reply, 'We have been accustomed in learning the principles of astronomy, politics, chemistry, &c. to have the elements of proof submitted to us for examination; why should we be expected to satisfy our minds on this one subject with a bare statement, which affords no corresponding means of experiment? We can understand that such proofs as are described in the account of manuscripts examined, ancient,

authors searched, and passages extracted, the structure of language analysed and brought to bear on the age and character of the Scriptures—we can understand that all this may exist; but are we not justified in withholding our assent, whilst to us all these sources of evidence are inaccessible, and rest only on the testimony of others?'

It is for this awakened feeling of independence in inquiry, (and it is a feeling which is growing, and must daily grow,) that the display of the true claims of the external evidences of Christianity is important; is, we may say, urgently important. Men of all ranks will expect and demand that this evidence, if evidence at all, should be made so to them. They must be told, that it is the statement of it, the testimony given to it, which they are properly called on to examine, and believe; they must be made to understand that this is the only way in which the great mass of evidence for all the facts of history, sacred or profane, ancient or modern, can be applied; their attention must be directed from a vague consideration of the original sources of proof, to the justness of assenting to that

testimony on which belief is claimed for the existence of such proofs; they must be taught, in short, to appreciate the principle, that such testimony must be unexceptionable, so long as Protestant freedom holds out a challenge to the educated sceptics of all ages and countries to confront it, and to invalidate its statements. This, indeed, is one of the noblest privileges of our release from papal bondage. The Church of Rome allows no sceptical declarations, and her assertions of the existence of all this external evidence must be admitted therefore on unreasonable grounds; the Church of England, and all Protestant Churches, give liberty to the adversaries of the Gospel to cavil and object; and on this liberty is grounded a just requisition of assent to those statements which the adversary cannot disprove. Let this be our strong hold in the advance of free-thinking and scepticism, and it becomes strong in proportion as free-thinkers and sceptics are bold and busy. Providence, it would seem, has thus designed the efforts of the most formidable adversaries of Christianity to prove the most important support to its truth. Blindly, indeed, they accomplish this good end,

and blindly in every age have those laboured in fulfilling the divine will who have most presumptuously opposed it. Like the Assyrian, who was the rod of God's anger, they mean it not, neither do their hearts think so; like the Jews taking counsel against the Lord and his Anointed, they are fulfilling God's will, and contributing to his glory, although through ignorance they do it.

§. 4. *Internal proofs of Scriptural Inspiration.*

As miracle is the only proof of Inspiration, the internal evidence, requisite to establish this in the case of any Scripture, must consist, either in some miracle being implied in the authorship, or else in some indication that the author performed testimonial miracles.

By miraculous authorship is meant something, either in the subject-matter, or in the manner of writing, which surpasses the powers of man generally, or of the particular author—some departure, in short, from the usual course of man's moral and intellectual agency, which can only be referred to divine wisdom; even as in a

miracle commonly so called, there is a departure from the established course of the material world, such as can only be attributed to divine power.

The Bible has several points of authorship which are strictly of this character. Not that every one of the revelations it contains, or professes to contain, can be appealed to for evidence. For, although none but God could have communicated any such knowledge, yet, in the case of all, except fulfilled prophecy, we cannot pronounce that they are really revelations, until we know that the author's assertion of this fact was supported by testimonial miracles. Prophecy fulfilled indeed may be so employed; because its fulfilment is voucher for its divine origin.

Most of the internal proofs of Inspiration fall under the description which I have given of miraculous authorship. But there are also strong indications, furnished by the Scriptures themselves, that the authors performed miracles in the attestation of their inspiration; and these I will first notice.

§. 5. *Internal proofs that the authors of Scripture performed testimonial miracles.*

In the early part of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, we meet with these words; "I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*[r]." Further on in the same Epistle occurs the following passage, together with much more to the same general purpose: "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." "What!

[r] Chap. ii. 3, 4.

came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord[s]."

It is evident that the author of this Epistle addressed it, not to one or two individuals, but to a body of men, and that he is appealing to them, directly or indirectly, for the reality of three facts, about which no body of men could possibly have been mistaken. The first of these is, that when Paul converted them, it was not owing to the impression which his eloquence or his wisdom made, but to the miraculous proofs of inspiration which he displayed—"the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The next point is, that part of this demonstration consisted in the communication of miraculous power, which they were then exercising so generally, as to require that they should be corrected in the abuse and irregular employment of it. The third point is, that among these miraculous gifts was one which enabled the "prophet or spiritual" person to decide whether Paul had written

[s] Chap. xiv. 27—32. and 36, 37.

the uncontrolled suggestions of his own mind; or the commands of the Lord—in other words, whether the Epistle was or was not Scripture.

Now it is morally impossible that an author should have written in this way, unless the facts so implied were all *notoriously* true. There is no direct assertion of these facts—no attempt to prove them, or to suggest circumstances which would call them to mind, as if they were likely to be unknown or forgotten. It is taken for granted, that all was as notorious as the sun at noon-day; and so certain as to preclude all possibility of denial. The proof therefore derived from this and similar *implied* assertions, is of a different kind from that which belongs to the *direct* assertion of a credible author, that miracles were wrought by him; and that his words were inspired. It is an appeal to eye-witnesses—and it is more—it is an appeal to persons conscious of performing the very like miracles—it is a claim to Scriptural authority for the author's writings, of which some of those addressed, as well as he, possessed a miraculous test. All this, if it had been stated by the author to a third party, would have been mere assertion, and

would have required to be proved; but conveyed to us as it is—that is, not requiring to be formally stated, but only alluded to, in a letter to the party concerned—it involves the very testimony on which alone such a statement can rest.

To illustrate the argument by a supposed case analogous to it. If a Belgian were to bring to this country a report of a revolt in the Netherlands, and of scenes of bloodshed at Brussels and elsewhere, his report would not necessarily be true; and according to its improbability, would require more or less proof. But, suppose this Belgian a man of consequence in his own country, and conspicuous for the part he had taken in the Revolution: suppose him writing to his countrymen from England; not, of course, to *relate* occurrences which they had witnessed as well as he, but to give them directions about the management of their affairs, in consequence of the situation they were placed in by the late events: suppose him, moreover, reminding them of the claim he had to their acquiescence in his advice, from the part which he had borne in those scenes, as well as from some commission which he then actually held for their provisional government:

is it likely that such a letter would be sent, unless the writer were alluding to facts, not only true, but notoriously true? is it conceivable, that it should be not only received by the Belgians, but carefully preserved by them, and transmitted by them to posterity?

This sort of evidence, by which the writer of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is proved to have performed testimonial miracles, does not belong indeed to all the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. To many however it does apply; although not always so forcibly, because in the instance of Paul's Epistle, the force of the evidence consists chiefly in the Scripture which contains the assertion, or implied assertion, of miracles, having been addressed to those who witnessed the miracles; and this circumstance, which is declared by the very form of an Epistle, requires to be proved in the case of history or of prophecy. The Pentateuch, for example, was addressed to eye-witnesses of the miracles asserted, no less than were St. Paul's Epistles; but the fact is not, of itself, so apparent. In some other portions of the Bible, our knowledge of this circumstance rests wholly on external evidences.

§. 6. *Prophecy fulfilled a proof of Inspiration.*

It is not my intention to enumerate the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, which become by their accomplishment evidence of scriptural inspiration; but, as in the case of the external evidence, shall chiefly direct my remarks to the principle which renders them evidence.

For this purpose it is necessary that four points be ascertained. I. That the prophecy was delivered previously to the event—else it would be no prophecy. II. That it applies to the event, and is applicable to no other; for a prediction that should seem to be fulfilled in more events than one, would not only leave it uncertain which was intended; but would betray the absence of that extraordinary prescience, which is displayed in fixing on the peculiar circumstances and distinct characteristics of the future event[d]. III. It is

[d] What is called *the double fulfilment* of some of the prophecies, is, in fact, only a repetition of the prophecy, in one

requisite that the event be such as could not have been foreseen by any human means; for then its prediction might be proof of sagacity, but not of inspiration. IV. That it should not produce its own fulfilment—as in the case of those heathen oracles which so often suggested the measures by which they were apparently verified.

The most striking prophecies are accordingly those, which contradict the results of our ordinary calculations about the future. For example, it being requisite that the early Christians should be deeply impressed with the Lord's prediction of Jerusalem's destruction, and their own deliverance from the scene of ruin, he not only foretold this, but appended a direction which ran

of the cases. For example, Isaiah foretold that our Lord should open the eyes of the blind; and his miraculous cures of the blind were types and prophetical figures of the removal of that spiritual blindness, which was the real object of the prophecy. So in the case of those predictions which were fulfilled primarily in certain temporal events which befel the Israelites, secondarily and fully in the spiritual events of the Church—the true Israel, of which the former was the perpetual type.

counter to all views of human prudence and foresight. The disciples were commanded to tarry within Jerusalem, until they saw the city encompassed with hostile armies[e]. It is well known that they had faith to do this, and that by a change in the plans of the enemy, which no human foresight could have anticipated, they were then enabled to escape without harm.

Of the many prophecies of the Old Testament to which the test may be applied, it will be sufficient, for the sake of illustration, to select that of Isaiah[f]: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;) so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up

[e] Luke xxi. 20, 21. compare Matt. xxiv. 15. and Mark xiii. 14. [f] Chap. lii. 13—15. and chap. liii.

before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his

grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors [g]."

That these words formed part of the book of Isaiah long before the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, is known by the most unsuspicious of all testimony—the testimony of the Jews who rejected him, and refused to recognise its fulfilment in him. That it was, in the second place, fulfilled in him, and can apply to no other

[g] See Paley's Evidences, vol. ii. p. 3.

person, is clear to an impartial mind, even from so much of his history as all admit. It comprises, namely, circumstances seemingly inconsistent, and which were nevertheless combined in the singular character and condition of Jesus; and among these are some which are quite independent of our belief in him as our Lord and Saviour. Jew, Heathen, and Christian, are alike vouchers for the fact, that "he made his grave with the wicked," that "he was numbered with the transgressors," and "poured out his soul unto death;" and yet that the result was "a portion with the great, and a dividing the spoil with the strong"—such a spread and sway, namely, of the religion of Christ crucified, as that the mightiest dominions of the earth have divided their allegiance between Him as their spiritual Lord, and the great and strong rulers of this world. This same combination of unnatural coincidences, makes the prophecy answer likewise the third and fourth requisites—that the event should not be capable of anticipation by any human means; and lastly, that it should not produce its own fulfilment.

The most striking prophecies of the New

Testament—those delivered by our Saviour himself—must be excluded from the evidence for an inspiration of Scripture; because, in recording these, the writer only professes to give the predictions of another; and this he might be supposed to do, without being himself endowed with any prophetic or inspired character. These prophecies form a very important feature in the scheme of general evidences for Christianity; but cannot be applied to our present purpose.

The exception still leaves some, the accomplishment of which has rendered them very satisfactory evidence of the inspiration of the authors who wrote them. Those of St. Paul respecting "the man of sin" and the "general apostacy" may be instanced. In his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, we find the following passage; "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with

you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan; with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness[h]."

That this description of some great corruption and subsequent reformation in the Church was written while the Roman government was yet heathen, and its stability unshaken, we know on evidence the same in kind, (although far stronger in degree,) as that which assures us of the age of Pliny's or Cicero's Epistles. Its preservation

[h] 2 Thess. ii. 3—12.

too, without being subsequently corrupted for the purpose of adapting it to the event, has been (as in the case of Isaiah's prophecy) most providentially accomplished through those very persons whom it condemns. The Papal Church, like the Jews of old, attest the purity of those Scriptures, out of which its corruptions are proved, and shewn to have been predicted. There is, moreover, in the above description, so exact a correspondence with the leading corruptions of Popery and the subsequent reformation of a large portion of the Church, as to satisfy the greater number of Protestants, at least, of the second requisite of a prophecy—that it should apply to the event, and to that event only. These circumstances, again, (if the application be correct,) are so far removed from any view which mere reason and human foresight could have suggested to a writer at the period of the Roman empire's greatness and of the Church's infancy, as to make it certain that the source of such knowledge was inspired wisdom, and the fulfilment not the mere result of the prediction.

In asserting for this prophecy the character of

evidence to the inspiration of the writer, I would not however be thought to overlook the fact, that of Christians, the Roman Catholics, at least, do not acknowledge the application; and that among Protestants, there have been some who have likewise denied this; and have sought for the event in the impieties and cruelties of Caligula[i], the extravagancies of the Gnostics[k], the revolt of the Jews from the Romans[l], and even the triumphant career of Titus[m]. For the failure of such an exact correspondence as is required to the character of a prophecy, in all these instances, the reader, if he has any doubts that require to be removed, may consult Bp. Newton's twenty-second Dissertation on the Prophecies. In the same Dissertation, or in Mr. Davison's tenth Discourse, he will likewise find the fulfilment as exhibited in the History of the Church's Popish corruptions, and of the subsequent Reformation, distinctly traced—if indeed his own impression, after reading the passage, leaves him in need of a guide.

[i] Grotius. [k] Hammond. [l] Le Clerc and Whitby.
[m] Wetstein.

It should be observed, however, that the use of this, and of all internal evidence, depends, much more than the use of the external, on the peculiar habits of thought, the character, and the pursuits of the inquirer. In short, whilst nearly the same impression may be made on all by a display of external proof, the same internal evidence, which is all-convincing to one, will be feeble to another, and no evidence at all to a third. The fact every thinking mind will acknowledge, (not in the case of religion alone, but on other subjects also,) and I shall have occasion again to revert to it.

And especially with respect to the force of prophecy fulfilled, it should be further taken into the account, that the prophecies of the Bible do not make their full impression *singly* but *collectively*. They are—however distinct the human authors in character, and however far apart the periods in which they wrote—a tissue of mutual references. Take from the mass a separate prophecy, it probably applies so inadequately to the event claimed for it, that we are ready to own, that so far from being applicable to that and that alone, its correspondence would

never have struck us, but for the aid of the ingenious commentator. Take that same prophecy; join it on to others, which it was evidently designed to follow up or to precede—to introduce or expand; and as we add part to part, the whole assumes an applicability, that makes us wonder at our former blindness.

We do not justice, for example, to this very passage of St. Paul, if we make use of the prophecy as it there appears alone. He evidently did not so express himself, as if he thought that all the reader was to know of it was contained in those words. He reminds the Thessalonians, that whilst he was with them he had told them these things; and therefore adapts what he now says to knowledge otherwise acquired. To put ourselves in the condition of the Thessalonians, so as to embrace in our view all the prophecy, we must join the apostle's hints to all with which they are connected in other Scriptures, and so interpret them. To my own mind, I confess, the passage alone exhibits such a curious and nice counterpart to the history of the Papal corruptions, and of the Church's reformation, that it does not seem to need this, in order that

we may so apply it; but the picture is much heightened by adding to it the same apostle's mention elsewhere of the same prophetic view; where he adds the circumstances of "speaking lies in hypocrisy," "forbidding to marry," "commanding to abstain from meats[n]," and the like. But when I compare it further with the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the Apocalypse, and both with those prophecies of the Old Testament, with which they are connected by a similarity of imagery, the shadowy outline assumes more and more the full lineaments of a portrait.

§. 7. *The moral instruction contained in Scripture a proof of inspiration.*

That the moral instruction contained in the Old Testament is worthy of its divine Author; and that the exceptions which have been taken against it apply to what were, in fact, only wise and merciful accommodations to the circumstances and condition of the people to whom it was origin-

[n] 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

ally addressed, need not here be insisted on. It is a view which contributes, indeed, to render the evidence of that portion of the Bible's inspiration satisfactory; it is a view, which to one who has thoughtfully traced the contemporary progress of heathen ethics, may seem to indicate more than mere human authorship. But still, these books were the literature of a people; their authors were the learned and highly-gifted of their nation; and if the sound and practical lessons of conduct which their writings convey far surpass the teaching of their age, it is conceivable that this might be because it was the subject on which the national mind had displayed its greatest energies. One country will get the start of another in some particular branch of science or of art—in eloquence, in poetry, or in criticism; and in these cases, all that can be positively asserted is, that individuals of superior talent have arisen, who have given a direction to the national pursuits; and that subsequent specimens of excellence in these, are partly proofs of the individual's genius, partly of the character of the community to which he belongs.

It is not so with the moral instruction con-

tained in the New Testament. Its authors certainly did not represent the learning, the genius, and the spirit of their age and country. Their rank in life, their daily occupations, their acquirements, and not least the tone of their writings, exclude them from the class of those who would be naturally authors; and far from availing themselves of the literary habits of their age and country, they afford in their writings the most marked contrast to the specimens of Rabbinical learning that have come down to us. What should we say of a few fishermen on the coast of Sussex, or a few mechanics of Manchester or Birmingham, who should publish to the world such views of political science, as should remove all the difficulties that at this day encumber politics, and obtain more influence than the laboured volumes of all the philosophers and statesmen of modern and ancient Europe? It is a supposition which is morally impossible: and that the authors of the New Testament should embody in their writings ethical instruction more pure, and far more practical, than ever before had been addressed to mankind, is equally impossible, without the intervention of superhuman

help. That philosophical minds, aided by learning and learned communication, should have effected this, would be no otherwise wonderful, than that Socrates or Bacon should surpass their age. But that the promulgators of the sublimest, and at the same time the simplest, ethical views in the world should be, in the first place, humble, uneducated persons; and, in the next place, members of a community, in which, whatever literature there was, was encumbered with the subtleties of a minute and intricate commentary, and with fanciful allegory; this is not merely wonderful, like the work of a Socrates or Bacon—not evidence of superior human intellect—but unaccountable, on any view, which the ordinary course of man's intellectual nature enables us to form.

If however we cannot admit the force of this argument, in its full extent, to Paul, who had learning, or, perhaps, to Luke; it applies without any diminution to Matthew, to John, and to Peter; but even to Paul, it must be allowed to apply with no inconsiderable force. Whatever education he had, it was Rabbinical; and from this school clearly he could not have derived the simple and

unsophisticated view of morals, which alone would distinguish any epistle of his from a Rabbinical writing. He had, in fact, much to unlearn through the influence of the Spirit; and does most expressly, and more than once, disavow all reliance on his natural human acquirements.

Nor, again, will it much affect the argument to suggest, that the writers of the New Testament were not the authors of these moral views, but Jesus, the Master, whose disciples they were: and that the morality of the New Testament, although proof of a superior nature or of inspiration in him, is no proof of inspiration in those who record his instructions. This argument might apply, indeed, to a mere concise statement of facts, or sayings, or to a few foundation doctrines; but moral instruction, conveyed as it is in the New Testament, interwoven and mixed with the general matter of the author, is not like a series of facts, or a collection of apophthegms, which can be exactly related or transferred from one to another. So to convey ethical views which one has received, as to make them one's own—especially to convey them unsystematically and incidentally—supposes the mind to have put

on new habits, not merely to have committed to memory certain facts. A regular code of ethics, or a series of moral precepts, might be transmitted from mouth to mouth for a few generations. These authors might have related the actions of our Lord—they might even have preserved in their pages his prophecies—without being themselves inspired men and prophets. All this is conceivable; and accordingly in the view of prophecy considered as proof of Scriptural inspiration, I have expressly excluded our Lord's prophecies from the argument. But the moral teaching of the New Testament (beyond the bare register of his sermons and parables) cannot be so considered.

When, therefore, it is suggested, that Jesus was the author of this morality, the suggestion still leaves unanswered the question, how could he so teach these persons, as after a two or three years' companionship, to be themselves accomplished teachers? Not only is the old inquiry of the Jews respecting Christ forced on us, "Whence had this man learning?" but another no less puzzling on any ordinary view, Whence had he the means of so suddenly trans-

ferring this learning to others[n]? To the divine origin of the Christian religion, indeed, the morality of the Gospel is equally evidence in whatever way this latter question is answered; but if the reasonable reply be, that the instruction his followers obtained must have been more than human, then the morality of their writings is proof that these writings were inspired. And such, I conceive, is the conclusion, at which every mind, neither biassed by prejudice, nor made callous by habitual neglect of religion, must arrive. In the strength of the impression produced there must always be differences of degree, according to the constitution and habits of different minds; but if the truth itself be altogether unperceived, this can, I fear, be attributed only to a corruption and unnatural state of the intellectual powers. The eye that has been closed from infancy, if opened in manhood or age, cannot be expected at once to measure the distance

[n] Such appears to have been actually the impression made on many of the Jews. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts iv. 13.

of the objects exhibited to it even in the clearest light, and to perform all those complicated functions of sight, which exercise and experience render familiar to others. So is it with the spiritual discernment of the mind.

And yet, it may be said, although Christ came that those who see not might see, how are these, the blind in heart and intellect, to be now convinced of their blindness? how, if not convinced, to be healed? Is not this case a hopeless one? Will not the Pharisee of every age say, "We see?" and will not the contemptuous suggestion of human pride still be, "Are we blind also?" To what purpose then is the roll of evidence unfolded, if to those who most need it, it presents one dull unmeaning blank? The reply is plain. On the chance of conversion and salvation which the most deplorable case of this kind may exhibit, we have no right to speculate. Every Christian—every one who himself believes—is a soldier of Christ, and is furnished more or less with the armour of God; with the sword of the Spirit, as well as with the helmet of salvation; and while the command is, "Quit ye like men, be strong," he is also told, that not on himself

depends the issue—he is to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of *his* might." Shall we therefore, any of us, dare to cast aside the weapons of our warfare, as if on them and on ourselves depended the success? Shall any, and, above all, shall the Christian minister say, "Am I God, that I should heal these souls of their leprosy?" forgetting, that in Israel—in his own true Israel—there is still, though unseen, the Prophet, whose hand, not ours, is to effect the cure. Disheartening doubts like these, that come across the efforts of a Christian on his Master's errand, can only be so long indulged, as he is forgetting the humble part which is his to act. Were it a sensible miracle he is performing, instead of developing or enforcing an argument, he would not more truly be the mere instrument, nor the work more truly his Lord's alone. Let him not therefore look to the feebleness of the apparent means, or say, Who then shall be saved? That Master, to whose service he is pledged, has taught him another language—one more confident, and yet more humble—more confident in divine power, more humble in his estimate of his own importance; he will say, "With man this is

impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

§. 8. *The omissions of Scripture a proof of Inspiration.*

One of the most striking features in the historical part of the New Testament, (to which I would confine the application of the present argument,) is the omission of so much matter, which would have gratified every reader's curiosity; and which every writer, one would think, would have been anxious to record. In the biography of the blessed Jesus, for example, there is none of that minute description of his person, dress, private habits, and the like, which we should fully expect to find, when we recollect especially that two of his biographers were his own familiar friends. None but the most scanty notice is found of that large portion of his life, which intervened from his circumcision to his temptation; pregnant with interest, as any occurrence of that period must have proved, both to them and to all generations of Christians. This is very

extraordinary, very unnatural. Look at the pretended gospels, which have been excluded from our canon, and the introduction of these topics is precisely what the uninspired writer has made part of his history; because he felt that it was natural. It matters not whether the pseudo-evangelist received these facts from tradition, or himself invented them; he was sure that they would give a natural and genuine air to his story, and so he made use of them. Why was this not done by Matthew, by Mark, by Luke, and by John? Why should all omit to do it?

In order to perceive, that some counter-human influence must have been exerted in the authorship of these gospels, it is not necessary that we should comprehend the wisdom of the omissions; the fact is at variance with the established laws of man's nature, and of itself indicates a supernatural interference. That it was however a wise provision, and worthy of that interference, is, I think, as evident to us now, as it must have been beyond human foresight at the time it was done. Let us but reflect on the mischievous and fatal results which have followed, whenever the Christian's faith and piety have

been diverted from the essential view of his Redeemer, to fabulous relics of the cross on which he died—the handkerchief which wiped his brow—and other personal memorials of him, which, if real and genuine, would, like the brazen serpent of the Israelites, only have been more likely to retain their hold on the superstitious veneration, the distorted piety, of successive generations. Experience shews that it would have been so. If pretended relics, if fabled accounts, were capable of seducing for ages the devotion of all Christendom from the Lord, to objects which became to them idols; what would have been the result, had all these been genuine and true? How should we have ever recovered from the spell, with which inherited habits and associations would have been investing no golden calf of man's own invention—but objects, that, like the brasen serpent, had been sanctified by association with miracle and divine help, and treasured up within the very ark of our covenant?

Again, how little do the evangelist-apostles say of their own ministry, as far as it was contemporary with his who is the principal subject of their histories? They and their companions were

commissioned to work miracles. They fulfilled their commission. So far we are informed. Now let any one imagine himself, after taking such a part in such a commission, writing a memoir, and saying no more of what he did—what he felt—than these writers have. Endeavour to put yourself for a moment in their situation. Think of the strange, bewildering sensation of the first miracle you found yourself performing! Could you ever have become historian of the scene in which it occurred, and have summed up the whole account by saying, "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them [o]?" The only miracle belonging to this period of their ministry, about which the apostles give any particulars, is one attempted, and not performed by them [p].

[o] Mark vi. 12, 13. St. Mark's Gospel is quoted, on the ground that its inspired authorship appears to have rested on St. Peter having either furnished the materials, or superintended it. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, only the account of their *mission* is given; and St. John is totally silent about the whole affair.

[p] Matthew xvii. 14.

Nor let it be supposed, that the argument depends on our knowledge from other sources that these miracles were wrought. He who forged such an account, and he who wrote the truth according to his free natural impulse, must alike have fashioned his statements, in a way directly opposite to the Gospel narratives. It is of itself and independently an indication of extra-human authorship, which may serve to confirm our proofs that miracles were really wrought; and, if we have not yet been satisfied by these proofs, sufficient to impress us with conviction more or less strong, that miraculous agency is apparent in the writings of these men, and to establish and coincide with their statements respecting miracles performed.

The absence of any code of laws for regulating the government of the Church, and of a form of Liturgy, is all equally inexplicable; whether we consider how naturally, how inevitably this would have been done by a human compiler of "The Acts of the Apostles;" or add to this the strong additional circumstance, that those who omitted to do it were Jews, before they were Christians—men accustomed to the most minute and punc-

tilious details of a written, ceremonial law; and claiming for Christianity a connection with that law—preaching the Gospel as founded on it.

So extraordinary indeed are these omissions, that it is much to be regretted that they are not noticed in any work on the evidences of our religion[k]. Men's minds so much vary with respect to the impression made by internal evidence, (as I have already had occasion to remark,) that many, possibly, who are not much impressed by any views of prophecy fulfilled, or of Gospel morality, may be forcibly struck and satisfied by this. To analyse and detail *all* the internal evidences of Christianity, and to give to each portion that relative importance which it will bear in each man's mind, would be impossible. But it is still useful to exhibit such a variety, as may, with God's blessing, suggest to each individual the proof which is most appropriate to him. Neither the writer on evidence nor the student should ever forget, that it is *relative;* the one should remember, that he has

[k] A recent publication, however, although not directly on the evidences of Christianity, contains some very valuable remarks on the subject. See "Errors of Romanism," chap. iv. §. 6.

to search for proof that will be proof *to him*—the other, that he has to furnish proofs various enough for such a choice; the student, that it is necessary for him to come to the study with some preparation of heart, and intellect, else God will not be at all inquired of by him—the teacher, that he must provide, as far as he can, not only meat for the strong, but milk for the babes—matter for the feeble and infantine spirit of inquiry.

§. 9. *Proof of Inspiration derived from certain peculiarities in the Scripture narratives.*

The general character of simplicity by which the writers of the New Testament are strikingly distinguished from Rabbinical authors, has already been incidentally noticed. The particular feature of it, to which I would now advert, as evidencing inspired influence, is a remarkable characteristic of their narratives. Considering the nature of the events related by the evangelical historians and biographers, the connection of the writers with those events, the deep and general interest

they were calculated to excite, and the importance of their results on mankind here and hereafter—the tone and manner in which they are recorded, is a marvel for which there is no solution altogether satisfactory, except that the authors themselves had received, as such, an official inspired character, in consequence of which all the ordinary symptoms of mere human feeling—of surprise, curiosity, or regret—were repressed. Read these narratives as official documents set forth by the inspired servants of the Most High, and all is intelligible; otherwise there is no understanding the frame of mind in which they wrote.

Theirs is a history of miracles, the historical picture of the scene in which the Spirit of God was poured on all flesh, and signs and wonders, visions and dreams, were part of the essentials of their narratives. How is all this related? With the same absence of high colouring and extravagant description with which other writers notice the ordinary occurrences of the world: partly, no doubt, for the like reason, that they were really familiar with miracles; partly too, because to them these miracles had long been contemplated

only as subservient measures to the great object and business of their ministry—the salvation of men's souls. On the subject of miracles, the means to this great end, they speak in calm, unimpassioned language; on man's sins, change of heart, on hope, faith, and charity; on the objects in short to be effected, they exhaust all their feelings and eloquence. Their history, from the narrative of our Lord's persecutions to those of Paul, the abomination of the Jews, embraces scenes and personages which claim from the ordinary reader a continual effusion of sorrow, or wonder, or indignation. In writers who were friends of the parties, and adherents of the cause for which they did and suffered so great things, the absence of it is, on ordinary grounds, incomprehensible. Look at the account even of the crucifixion. Not one burst of indignation or sympathy mixes with the details of the narrative. Stephen the first martyr is stoned, and the statement comprised in these few words, "they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit[k]." The unceasing toil, and the various sufferings of the apostles

[k] Acts vii. 59.

are slightly hinted at; or else related in this dry, frigid way. "And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go[l]." "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe[m]." Had these authors no feeling? Had their mode of life bereaved them of the common sympathies and sensibilities of human nature? Read such passages as Paul's parting address to the elders of Miletus; the same apostle's recommendation of the offending member of the Corinthian Church to pardon; and, more than all, the occasional bursts of conflicting feeling, in which anxious apprehension for the faith and good behaviour of his converts, is mixed with the pleasing recollection of their conversion, and the minister and the man are alike strongly displayed—and it will be plain that Christianity exercised

[l] Acts v. 40. [m] Acts xiv. 19, 20.

no benumbing influence on the heart. No: their whole soul was occupied with one object, which predominated over all the means subservient to it, however great those means might be. In the storm, the pilot's eye is fixed on the headland which must be weathered; in the crisis of victory or defeat the general sees only the position to be carried, and the dead and the instruments of death fall around him unheeded. On the salvation of men—on this one point, the witnesses of Christ and the ministers of his Spirit, expended all their energy of feeling and expression. All that occurred—mischance, persecution, and miracle—were glanced at by the eye of faith only in subserviency to this mark of the prize of their high calling, as working together for good, and all exempt from the associations which would attach to such events and scenes, when contemplated by themselves, and with the short-sightedness of uninspired men. Miracles were not to them objects of wonder, nor mischances a subject of sorrow and lamentation. They did all, they suffered all, to the glory of God.

Still, is it possible that the natural man should have sustained, without one relapse, one single

deviation, a tone of feeling so much beyond man? Could the circumstances of these writers, overpoweringly impressive though they were, have secured them against even an occasional betrayal of wonder, of pity, of indignation, or of sorrow? The more we reflect on the nature of the scenes they describe, the more forcibly will the question be suggested. Must not such emotions have arisen, on some occasions at least, in the breast even of men so circumstanced—men, who were still of like passions with ourselves? That the expression of such feelings should no where appear, throughout the narratives of each and of all, does certainly seem inexplicable; unless we admit a miraculous control of their authorship—unless we suppose them, in short, to have been, not merely workers and witnesses of miracles, but miraculously guided in their writings.

As in the case of the omissions, it should be observed, that this argument does not need the prior supposition, that the miraculous portion of the New-Testament-history is true. The attempt to describe an unreal scene of miracles would have led, as naturally, to highly wrought details—certainly to some expression of those strong

feelings, in which it would be the writer's object that others should sympathise. The only reasonable account that can be given of authors writing so, is that which the official character of inspiration supplies.

§. 10. *The phraseology of the New Testament a proof of Inspiration.*

Another proof of the overwhelming influence of an impression, which nothing perhaps but a part borne in a scene of miracles and inspiration could have made, is the phraseology of the New Testament.

Besides those peculiarities of style which indicate the country or the age of the authors—besides the Hebraisms, Latinisms, and other idiomatic characteristics of time or place—there are phrases far more striking which are peculiar to these writings as *Christian writings*. Now this *evangelical phraseology*, these terms and phrases which distinguish the authors of the New Testament from all profane authors, are, for the most part, obvious allusions to the historical facts of

the Christian religion. They bear witness, not to the age or country of the authors, but to the facts which gave birth to those new ideas of which they are the expression. More than fifty, perhaps more than an hundred such peculiarities may be instanced. For example, ‘ the offence of the cross,’ ‘ the faith,’ ‘ the truth,’ ‘ justified,’ ‘ saved,’ ‘ redeemed,’ ‘ beloved,’ are all phrases which, in the sense in which they are used by the New Testament writers, must have been, without the historical key, as unintelligible to the contemporary Hellenist, as to a scholar of any subsequent age. They were coined, or rather stamped anew with their current meaning, by the continual effort which was made to express new truths, new ideas, among persons in whose minds such truths, such ideas, were overwhelmingly predominant. Without this supposition, indeed, the strange meaning given to so many phrases is unintelligible and unaccountable. To the Christian writers, and to them only, these are the habitual and unpremeditated expression of thoughts to which they were daily giving utterance. And yet, nothing can be conceived more difficult to forge or feign than such a distortion of ordinary language, even

by an individual—by a society it is impossible. Tyranny could not force it on any body of men; because, however compliant they may be, they would be incapable of conforming merely because they were willing to effect the change. That change must be the spontaneous result of a poverty of expression, that poverty of expression the result of a new class of ideas presented to the mind, absorbing the attention, and demanding vent in language.

The character of these evangelical phrases is very remarkable. Let a Christian—let an infidel—examine them, and the one no less than the other must acknowledge, that they have had their origin in the *facts* alleged to have taken place in the life of Christ, and in the first progress of his religion—nay more, that they had their origin principally in the *events* which are represented as *miraculous*. Believer and infidel must alike admit this; and neither, if he reflects on the stubborn process of forming and changing languages, will doubt, that they who so adopted these phrases, so habitually used them, must have believed and must have dwelt with the intense interest of sincere and thorough conviction

on the facts which gave occasion to their use. Christians who in a subsequent period have inherited this phraseology, are by this very circumstance rendered less sensible of its force as evidence. They require to be reminded, that the evangelical forms of expression which first infected the Hellenistic Greek of the apostles, and have since been transferred from thence into the languages of all nations which have received their testimony, were the result, and could only have been the result, of belief in the historical events narrated in the Gospels, accompanied with an intensity of interest, such as the reality of those events alone could have inspired.

These *Christianisms* of the New Testament, do not, it is true, like the preceding points of evidence, prove that the authors who used them were either inspired, or workers of miracles. They only indicate that inspiration and miracle existed, and that these writers were living and writing under the extraordinary influence of the scene. Their use therefore in the body of internal evidence is that of an auxiliary. Some other proof is required, in order to fix on these very authors as among the number of

those who actually performed miracles, and were inspired.

§. 11. *General remarks on the character of the internal proofs contrasted with the external.*

In the preceding review of the internal evidences of inspiration, I have more than once adverted to the fact, that this kind of proof is not equally convincing, equally proof to all. It depends for its impression, much more than the external, on the character of the inquirer. The reason appears to be this. External proof, although often removed to too great a distance to be accurately surveyed—although often too extensive also to be taken in at one glance—is always exhibited in distinct, well-defined masses. Internal proof, on the contrary, lies indeed at our feet, as it were, and admits of close examination, but always appears as a compound. Sometimes (as, for example, in the case of the New Testament phraseology) its affinity is for some other kind of evidence; more frequently (as in the instances of prophecy fulfilled, and the Gospel morality)

for that which is not itself proof, but necessary to it. There are certain plants which cannot display their natural character, unless they entwine round others for support; and chemical combinations are requisite to enable certain substances, again, to exhibit their most striking properties. Something like this takes place with internal proofs; and the attendant circumstances essential to them are often for this reason themselves called proofs. The estimate we form of the morality of the Gospel as evidence, depends, for example, on the view we take of man's intellectual powers—of the character, age, and country of the individuals who wrote Scripture—of the contemporary progress of ethical knowledge elsewhere. Prophecy fulfilled, again, is, in like manner, stronger or weaker evidence, according as our knowledge of the events is accurate, our impressions vivid, and our susceptibility of such impressions easily excited; and so much that is purely historical research is sometimes involved in the question of its fulfilment, as to deter minds, not naturally constituted or trained by education for it, from attempting to do more than enough to secure an indolent assent.

If, however, this sort of evidence, like gold in the ore, is apt to escape the heedless or unpractised observer, because of the foreign matter with which it is always found mixed; a combination of one kind of evidence with another—of internal with external, and of each with each—contributes, and is indeed indispensable, to a just estimate of the point to be established. The inquirer into the truth of Scriptural inspiration, should place before his mind, not only the separate result of any one process of proof, but the combined result of all. Let him ask himself, not only is this or that prophecy fulfilled? is this or that fact incompatible with mere human authorship? and is the author, therefore, inspired? Let him ask himself—is it conceivable, that these writers should appeal to eye-witnesses of miracles attesting their inspiration—should foretell the future—inculcate lessons of morality purer and more sublime than philosophy ever taught—exhibit so many other marvellous characteristics—should do all this, and be, all the while, writing not under the influence of inspiration?

Lastly, he should look around him, and inquire, whether any writings in the world, that claim supernatural interference in their authorship, have

had *that kind of proof* which the Scriptures have, and which is requisite, and alone sufficient, to establish such a claim. Let him inquire respecting the Koran and the Popish legends. In both, and in all other instances, it will be found, that if sensible miracles are appealed to, it is the authority of the document that supports the credit of the alleged miracles, not the miracles that prove the inspiration of the document. So likewise, in the case of pretenders to sensible personal communion with God, and to his extraordinary interference, no testimonial miracles have ever been adduced, corresponding to those performed by God's servants of old.

That either a new generation of inspired persons should arise; or that additions should be made to the present canon of Scripture by any fresh interposition of Providence, are anticipations certainly not inconceivable; but as certainly not warranted by any promise contained in holy writ—and I should say, at variance with the perfect and finished character of the Christian dispensation [n]. At all events, let us admit neither

[n] I have stated my reasons for this view more fully in my History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 73.

an inspiration of persons nor of writings—by whatever name it may be called—until such credentials as God vouchsafed to his former messengers, and the recorders of his word, and which alone are admissible, be again presented to his Church and to the world. Let us take heed to the prophecy which warns the Church, that in the latter times there shall be false prophets and seducing spirits; and, not least, let us take heed, that we be not ourselves in that number. To deceive one's self, is quite as likely a case as to be deceived by another; and probably no religious impostor ever existed, who did not either begin or end by imposing on himself.

PART II.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF INSPIRATION.

§. 1. *General remarks.*

THE term *inspired*, in its widest extent of signification, may be applied to all who have been miraculously enabled, either to receive a divine revelation, or to execute a divine commission. Not that some of God's servants were inspired for one of these purposes, and some for the other. Those who received revelations, were called on to perform some holy service in consequence, and such service could only, of course, have been enjoined by means of a revelation.

In what consisted the miraculous qualification either for receiving a revelation, or for executing a divine commission, and also under what limitation it was granted; are questions, which we have no right to decide by mere conjecture, nor

indeed, in any other way, than by examining the facts and assertions contained in the only authentic record of inspired persons—the Bible. Once satisfied by the appropriate evidence, that a human being is inspired, we should be bound to take his own word for the nature and extent of his inspiration. Our obligation with regard to the Scriptures is the same. If the proofs of their inspiration have satisfied us, to the Scriptures themselves we must go—on the Scriptures alone we must depend, for the nature and extent of their inspiration, as well as of the inspiration of those whose holy agency and revelations they record.

Such an inquiry as this will comprehend, I. The different modes of *revelation* for receiving which men have been inspired. II. The different kinds of divine *agency*, or the different purposes for which men have received revelations and inspiration. III. The nature and extent of the *inspiration*, i. e. of the miraculous qualification, both for receiving a revelation, and also for fulfilling the course of duty arising out of it. This last, the personal endowment and qualification, is, it should be observed, strictly speaking, the *inspiration;* for,

the extraordinary knowledge imparted by God, as well as the act of imparting it, we more properly call *revelation*[a].

§. 2. *The different modes of revelation for receiving which men have been inspired.*

The various forms of divine communication to mankind, which have required or implied inspiration, may be comprised under the general description of Visions, Voices, Dreams, and instinctive Impulses. There is, it is true, reason to infer from Scripture, that there may have been one other method, as will be presently noticed; but these are all of which Scripture gives any *definite*

[a] One of the objections brought by infidels against revelation, turns on this ambiguity of the term. A revelation, say they, can be only such to those who actually and immediately receive it from heaven. St. Paul's revelations, for instance, may have been revelations to him, but cannot be so to others. Now this is true of revelation, in one sense of the word; if, namely, we mean by it *the act of revealing*. But it is clearly not true, if we mean by it the communication itself—*the knowledge revealed.*

account. Indeed, no other mode of divine communication is perhaps intelligible to an uninspired person, except that wherein the mediation of a distinct being is interposed; and this does not imply or require any inspiration of the person who should so receive a revelation. Our Lord's hearers, for example, had revelations addressed to them through Him; but this did not require or cause them to be inspired. The same was the case with the holy messages conveyed to the patriarchs by angels in the form of men. In all such instances, the persons addressed, would not necessarily be otherwise affected, than if a mere inspired man, like themselves, were announcing a revelation, for the receiving of which he, not they, had been inspired.

By the term *Visions*, is meant any communications conveyed through an object of sight. Of this kind were, the hand-writing on the wall of Belshazzar's banquet room, the pillar of fire and cloud which guided the Israelites through the wilderness, and the like[b].

[b] Daniel v. 5. Exodus xiii. 21, 22.

Voices.—This term is intended to signify all revelations conveyed through the sense of hearing. These were often accompanied with extraordinary impressions on the other senses; and were probably the most frequent, because they were the most distinct mode of communication. Such was the giving of the Ten Commandments, the call of Moses, and perhaps all those revelations designated simply by the expression, "The Lord said unto him [c]."

Dreams.—Under this title I would include whatever was addressed to the imagination only; whether the abstraction from a consciousness of surrounding objects was the effect of sleep, or of some supernatural influence. As instances of this class may be mentioned, Peter's vision of the sheet, Jacob's dream, and the like [d].

Instinctive impulses.—This term is used to denote some method of making known the divine will, which does not appear to have been an address either to the senses or to the imagination, but to have operated on the desires, affections,

[c] Exodus iii. 4. xx. 1. Genesis xvii.

[d] Acts x. 10. Genesis xxviii. 12.

and inclinations, as those other communications did on the senses or the imagination. Its use, therefore, could not have been to impart an original revelation, but supposes one already given.

§. 3. *The nature and extent of supernatural qualifications for receiving a revelation.*

The first remark suggested by a review of the various kinds of revelation is, that, in all, the senses and the imagination appear to have been affected only as in the ordinary course of nature—that the exercise of sight, of hearing, and of fancy, was, it would seem, in every case, of the same kind as that produced by natural objects, natural sounds, and natural sleep. Thus Samuel is described as mistaking the voice of God for that of Eli[e]; and another, more experienced, as desiring to be certified by a sign, that the impression was supernatural, and being gratified in his desire as reasonable[f].

This being so, it follows, (as was remarked under the head of Proofs,) that, besides *the vehicle*

[e] 1 Sam. iii. [f] Judges vi. 17.

of communication, whether voice, vision, or dream, some *sign of confirmation* must always have been provided, in order to satisfy the person visited, that he was neither imposed on, nor imposing on himself—imposed on, as in the case of "lying spirits," of human contrivances, or of accidental phenomena; imposing on himself, as in the case of enthusiasm. Not that in all or in most instances any *record* will be found of the sign of confirmation: partly, perhaps, because the revelation alone concerned those to whom the records of the event are addressed—the sign, the persons visited. Still it is in many instances mentioned. In some indeed it was unavoidable; whenever, namely, the same display served the double purpose of confirming sign and vehicle of communication, as in the case of the hand-writing addressed to Belshazzar[g]. In some cases, again, the two are connected together, so as to form what may be called in loose phrase one revelation. Of this kind was that which occurred at St. Paul's conversion[h]. The voice alone was the medium of communication; while the light served

[g] Dan. v. 5.

[h] Acts ix. 3—5.

to certify that it proceeded from no human lips [g]. The same may be observed of the call of Moses at the bush [h]. Sometimes also the two were so joined, as that the sign should not become proof until afterwards; it being in this case a sort of prophetic appendage. Of this kind was Zacharias's revelation respecting John the Baptist, that of Cornelius concerning his own admission into the Church, and the like [i]. The last case is where the two were disjoined; and then the confirmation was effected either by some distinct revelation, or by a specific miracle. Thus the budding of Aaron's rod was a sign of confirmation to Aaron, and the miracle of the fleece to Gideon [k]. Thus, too, the power of working miracles, granted in all ages to the messengers of God, were signs not only to those to whom they were sent, but to themselves also, that they were really so commissioned.

[g] It is often asserted, that St. Paul then saw the Lord. But this could not have been the case. He was immediately struck blind, and the manifestation of Christ, of which he speaks, took place subsequently in the *Temple at Jerusalem.*

[h] Exod. iii. 2, 4. [i] Luke i. 11. Acts x.

[k] Numb. xvii. 8. Judges vi. 37—40.

It is probable, that for those who were in the habit of receiving frequent communications, a miracle in every case might not have been requisite. For, although it is true, that these modes of addressing the senses or imagination were apparently the same as if ordinary and natural causes were operating; still, the eye, the ear, or the mind, would become familiarized to these, as to any other sounds, sights, or even dreams. The experience of many may be appealed to, for the fact, that dreams do recur, and are remembered as repetitions of former dreams. Now, a dream ascertained to be divine, might have had some characteristic, which, when recognized in other subsequent dreams, might have served to indicate their divine origin. Thus, when Samuel is represented, (in the instance already noticed,) as ignorant of the nature of the heavenly call, the expression of Scripture is, that "he did not yet know the Lord[m];" the natural interpretation of which seems to be, that he had not yet become acquainted with the voice by experience. In like manner, Adam is said to have "known"

[m] 1 Sam. iii. 7.

or recognised the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden[n]. That, even in these cases, it might have been sometimes the duty of the inspired to wait for a confirming sign—suppose such only as the instinctive impulse—and that for neglecting to do so they might have been sometimes misled, as in the case of Balaam, is not improbable[o].

Again, although the eye or ear was opened to impressions, which would seem to have been of themselves undistinguishable from natural sounds and sights, it does not follow that the *import* of these sounds and sights was always intelligible to unassisted and uninspired men. Some miraculous assistance—some inspiration of power to understand the meaning of the voice or vision or dream, must occasionally have been needed and given. Instances are recorded too, in which the revelation was given to one, the interpreting faculty, or inspiration for understanding its import, to another. Joseph, for example, was inspired to understand the meaning of miraculous dreams which Pharaoh had, and Daniel for interpreting those of the Babylonish king. Peter's

[n] Genesis iii. 8, 10. [o] Numbers xxii. 20, *et seq.*

vision of the clean and unclean animals, is an instance, in which the miraculous power of understanding a symbolical vision, was withheld, and instead of it the explanation brought about through a separate revelation connected with it. The meaning of the apostle's dream would seem to have been suggested to him by the voice calling on him to "go with the men, doubting nothing [o]."

Besides these forms of revelation which holy writ enables us to describe, and which have accordingly formed the subject of inquiry thus far, there would seem to have been some, which required a faculty of perception, such as is not called into exercise in our present state of being, and by the phenomena of the world in which we now live. On no other supposition, perhaps, can we understand, how St. Paul should be incapable of explaining to others the kind of revelation, which he represents himself as once receiving. He describes himself as uncertain, whether he was in the body or out of the body; and applies to the divine communion he so experienced the epithet "unspeakable [p]." That the mind may receive

[o] Acts x. 20.

[p] 2 Cor. xii. 1—4.

impressions, even without the intervention of miracle, which can only be described by faint analogies, is a fact which the experience of many can testify, and may render such a state as Paul's conceivable. Many persons, for example, after inhaling the nitrous oxide that produces such a singular state of ecstasy, vividly recollect the strange scene of delusion, and yet declare, that it cannot be represented by any known impression on the senses, or by any pictures of the imagination. The dreams of an invalid, whose nerves have been long and habitually disordered, furnish often an illustration of the same kind [q].

The usual form of revelation seems, however, to have been some address to the senses, and the usual qualification no more than what is implied in the privilege of perceiving it, in the assurance of

[q] The sublimity of description produced by this very vagueness, in "the Confessions of an opium eater," will occur to many of my readers. It will be understood, of course, that I am not asserting or supposing St. Paul's inspiration to have been a state of mind bearing any direct resemblance to these cases; but, as being analogous to them in one respect; viz. that in both, the impression was vividly remembered, but incapable still of being accurately described to another.

a confirming sign, and in the power (if needed) of miraculously understanding the meaning of any symbol or other mysterious form of expression, adopted by divine Wisdom.

The style and structure of the prophetical books of the Bible indicate this; and furnish the best illustration of the view which we have been taking. The prophets tell us of certain symbolical scenes which were exhibited to them; and these statements are, doubtless, intended to be literally understood. Their works may, accordingly, be characterized as long picture-rolls, in which the mysterious engraver has occasionally introduced among his figures notes and explanations of the design. What to himself was dark, or what he was forbidden to interpret, he left solely in the hieroglyphic form, which had been the vehicle of divine communication to him; whilst the other images have their meaning written, as it were, underneath[q]. Hence the perpetual

[q] See, e. g. Daniel's vision of the four beasts, ch. vii. The former part of the chapter to v. 15, contains a picture of the vision; the remainder is the comment or explanation. See also Jeremiah, ch. xxiv. Ezekiel xxxvii. &c.

interchange of what is called the poetical style of prophecy, (but which oftener, perhaps, is the imagery of the original vision,) and of the prophet's plain unadorned language of comment or exhortation. Hence too certain common characteristics of style, and even sameness of matter, which exist between these holy authors, however distinguished in other points, and however far removed from each other by the periods in which they wrote. The close coincidence, for example, between some passages of the book of Revelations and of the writings of the older prophets, would according to this view imply, not that St. John copied from the former inspired books, but that the old visions were repeated to him, for the purpose of qualifying him to explain them now more fully than was done before—or, rather, to explain some, and to leave others in the form best calculated for being explained by the successive events as they should take place.

The preceding view of the manner in which the servants of the Most High were qualified for receiving a revelation, will in some measure have anticipated the inquiry into the *extent* of that

qualification. The privilege of knowing the mind of the Lord, appears to have been in all instances limited to the particular revelation, out of which the agency of the inspired arose. We have no indication of a more general insight being granted to any. Much less can we presume that any mere man—that the angels which are in heaven—ever had their faculties so enlightened, as to perceive all the Lord's counsels, even all respecting man. To some more revelations were given than to others; but the very fact of their frequent occurrence to the same individual, shews that there was no cleansing of the mortal vision once for all—no inspiration which qualified the mind to take in all of the secret and the future, and to know all mysteries. The apostle who boasts of receiving revelations inferior to those of none other who was inspired, includes himself under the general assertion of knowing *in part*, and prophesying *in part*[r].

[r] 1 Cor. xiii. 9. It is worthy of notice, in reference to this fact, that the knowledge of the divine will claimed by each successive pope, far exceeds that of his pretended predecessor St. Peter. Well may prophecy, therefore, represent him—not as a false apostle—not as usurping the apostolical seat—

It may be presumed, indeed, that even this privilege of receiving a revelation was not always accompanied with a power of comprehending its import—certainly not of comprehending its *full* import[s]. Many of the shadowy prophecies, which foreshewed Christ and his Gospel kingdom, were, probably, as little understood by the prophet as by the people. They were designed as an embryo form of revelation, to be deposited in the old Scriptures, but not to assume their ultimate character and signification, until the fulness of the time. A general surmise of promises not transitory, of a Saviour from sin as well as from sorrow, from enemies spiritual as well as tem-

but as one who " as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." 2 Thess. ii. 4.

[s] When Caiaphas declared, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation might not perish, he appears, not only to have misapplied a prophecy which he was uttering, but to have been unconscious that he was prophesying. See John xi. 49—53. Was this the case with the words uttered by the governor of the feast, when our Lord turned water into wine? " thou hast kept the good wine until now." John ii. 10. They certainly seem to indicate an allusion to the change of dispensation which was then taking place.

poral—this was all that was needed for the contemporaries of the prophet, and for the prophet himself, and was all, possibly, that he generally understood of his own dark visions. "Unto them," writes St. Peter to the Church, "it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into[s]." Some, doubtless, like Abraham, beheld the day of Christ with more clearness of prophetic vision than others; but the least of the kingdom of heaven, when it was come, was, in this respect, a greater prophet—knew more of the mind of the Lord—than the greatest of them of old.

It is impossible, for a reflecting mind, not to contrast the Scriptural account of the Lord Jesus, with this view of a strict limitation of the prophetic spirit in all God's other messengers, from

[s] 1 Peter i. 12. The original word (παρακύψαι) implies an intense anxiety to ascertain the nature of some object—it means literally, to stoop down in order to examine.

the patriarchs unto the apostles. "All things" (it is his own representation of himself when speaking of the divine secrets) "are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him[t]."[*] Is any ready to reply, as did the Jews of old, "Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true?" His words to us, as to them, are, "I am one that beareth witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me[u]." Think of the various kinds of evidence by which he bore witness of himself—by which he proved that whatever he asserted God must have sanctioned. Think of the miracles he wrought, the prophecies he fulfilled, the life he lived, and the death he died. Think on the confirmation of his truth by the establishment of Christianity, and by its wonderful results to this day on the world. Think, if you have ever experienced it, on the power of his Holy Spirit to help you in an hour of trial and distress. But, perhaps, he may seem to

[t] Matt. xi. 27. Luke x. 22. [u] John viii. 13—18.

have been asserting only a larger share, than belonged to other inspired persons of this Holy Light. Is this the obvious import of his words? Not so did St. Paul understand them, when he spoke of "the mind of Christ[y]," as the source of all his revealed knowledge—the height and depth which his unsealed eye was permitted to search. Not such was the interpretation of another apostle—one who was doubtless present when the words fell from his Master's lips. St. Peter speaks of the Old Testament prophets, as St. Paul does of the New, describing them as employed in "searching what or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow[z]." Must we not rather, adopting the language of inspiration, say of patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, "Were they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation[a]?" But of the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever[b]."

[y] 1 Cor. ii. 16.

[z] 1 Peter i. 11.

[a] Heb. i. 14.

[b] Heb. i. 8. and Psalm xlv. 6.

§. 4. *The different purposes for accomplishing which men have been inspired.*

The agency for which the Almighty inspired his servants in his progressive scheme of revelation and guidance is so various, and often of so mixed a character, as to make it difficult to arrange it under any specific heads which would exhaust the subject. Our object will, however, be sufficiently attained, by bringing under review the more prominent of these inspired agents, and examining the nature of their respective commissions. Moses, the Judges and Kings of Israel, the Prophets, and the Apostles, are those whose agency will be considered for this purpose.

Moses was divinely commissioned and inspired to negociate with Pharaoh the removal of the Israelites from Egypt, and to superintend their escape—to give them a religious law—to give them a civil polity—to act the delegated part of chief magistrate; and to superintend the observance, both of their civil and of their religious code—to prepare, instruct, and train them for

taking possession of the promised land—to prophesy—to write Scripture.

The judges and kings of Israel.—Their agency embraced generally the vicegerency in God's government of his people, of which the main principle was the worship of Jehovah according to his revealed will, and the suppression of idolatry—in peace, the administration of justice, and preservation of social order—in war, the conduct of armies, and the performance of particular exploits—the building, honouring, and preserving the Temple—and (besides minor points which need not be enumerated) in some instances, prophecy; and in some too, Scripture.

The prophets were commissioned and inspired to enlarge gradually the field of revelation—to convey particular instructions to the Israelites, and in some instances to others—to predict future events—and, some of them, to write Scripture.

The apostles and their coadjutors were ordained and qualified by the Spirit—to bear testimony to a series of historical facts embraced in the ministry of Jesus, and in the subsequent dispensation of the Spirit—to explain the import

and object of these events, or, in other words, the doctrines arising out of them—to found, govern, and instruct the Christian societies—to predict future events—in some instances, to write Scripture.

Of these commissions, some were general and permanent—what in human affairs might be called, *standing commissions*—as, for example, the inspiration and appointment of the apostles to preach the Gospel, and of Moses, to conduct the Israelites from Egypt through the wilderness. In other instances, inspiration was given, with a view to some single act, without implying any permanently inspired character. The inspiration of Elisabeth for the salutation of Mary is an illustration of this kind of inspired appointment.

Sometimes, again, those inspired for a general course of duty, although qualified for their regular services, appear to have required, in certain cases, a special direction or help from God. Of this, we have an instance, in the particular instructions given from time to time to Moses, after he had been appointed the leader of the Israelites, and had been divinely qualified for his office. The inspired agent was thus kept in mind of his

own natural weakness, insufficiency, and dependence on his divine Master, which the habitual exercise of extraordinary power and talent must have often tempted him to forget[a].

Sometimes, lastly, the Almighty so far suspended or superseded the delegated agency of these his ministers, as to manifest his own undelegated agency instead of theirs; as, for example, in the delivery of the Ten Commandments from mount Sinai. One object of this too might have been, to remind both the inspired and those to whom they ministered, that all the power and authority was really Jehovah's, although generally displayed through the instrumentality of human agents.

There are portions of the Bible which must have been written under a general commission, and others from special instruction. The *predictive* parts of the prophetical books must have been the result of positive and particular directions; the history, on the other hand, and the apostolical epistles, may be more properly, perhaps, classed among the ordinary acts of an

[a] St. Paul discovers to us his consciousness of such a danger. See 2 Cor. xii.

extraordinary agency—that is, the general inspiration to write—the general commission and qualification were given; the details of their duty left, to a certain extent, to their own choice.

It will be observed, that in enumerating the principal kinds of inspired agency, no mention has been made of the performance of miracles. The reason is this. Although inspired agency is, of course, miraculous, yet in its object, and in its miraculous character too, it differs essentially from miracles properly so called. The worker of a miracle must, doubtless, have been instructed by inspiration, as to the time and circumstances of his calling in this divine interposition; but the characterising point is, that the ultimate purpose of the miracle was always to *attest the inspiration*, not of the inspiration to effect the display of miracles. In other words, inspiration was supernatural *assistance*, miracles supernatural *proof*. In the gifts of inspiration, accordingly, the results naturally followed from a cause miraculously given; in the performance of miracles, properly so called, there was no natural connection between the apparent cause and the effect; the absence of this being the important circum-

stance for *proof*. When Paul, for example, exercised his inspired wisdom, or knowledge, his eloquence, or his power of interpreting a foreign language, the result was, in each case, such, as would have followed, if by ordinary means he had acquired these intellectual endowments. When, on the other hand, he healed the sick, or raised the dead, there was no natural connection between any form which he used for these purposes and the result; for *proof* of divine interposition it was requisite that there should be none. Paul was then merely the formal or ceremonial instrument—the officiating minister in a ceremony attached to the divine interference and manifestation.

It does not follow from this, that none of the gifts of the Spirit served the purpose of miraculous proof, as well as of assistance; but the distinction, nevertheless, holds good in respect of these; and they assume a different character according as they are viewed under this or that aspect. The diffused gift of languages on the day of Pentecost was a testimonial miracle, because it was a result for which there was no natural cause; but this acquirement of a foreign tongue, by any

one of the individuals present, would not be afterwards recognised as miraculous, merely by the use of that language. This would appear only like the regular result of such an acquirement, however obtained.

This essential character of a miracle, as an interposition of God, in which the worker was only the performer of the ceremony attached to it, is important in one point of view, which deserves our notice. It can hardly be doubted by one who attentively reads the Gospel history, that our Lord on some occasions studiously represented the performance of miracles by himself, as a case differing from this—as if he, in short, were himself the divine interposer. Take, for example, his cure of the child possessed by a dumb spirit, as related in St. Mark's Gospel[b], where he is represented as performing the miracle *without* prayer and fasting; and yet accounting for the failure of his apostles in their attempt to do so by the assertion, "this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." The same may be observed of the emphatic way in which he called Lazarus from the tomb, and bade

[b] Chap. ix. 14—29. also in Matthew xvii. 14—21.

the widow of Nain's son awake to life, "Lazarus, come forth." "Young man, *I say unto thee*, Arise." His design is the more apparent too, if we contrast with his words the opposite *disavowal* of the apostles, such as is exhibited in the language of Peter when he healed a man of the palsy, "Æneas, *Jesus Christ maketh* thee whole[c]:" and again, when with John he healed the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his

[c] Acts ix. 34. In the miracle of raising Tabitha, the same acknowledgment was implied by his first kneeling down and praying. See ver. 40, of the same chapter.

name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all[d]." The more we study the inspired character of God's various messengers to mankind, the more irresistible is the impression, that Jesus alone was not a mere inspired man, but "God manifest in the flesh[e]."

§. 5. *The nature and extent of supernatural qualifications for each different purpose.*

The miraculous qualification of an inspired agent of the Almighty must, it is plain, have varied greatly, not only according to the character of the revelations he received, but still more according to the kind of service in which he was to be engaged. The recorder of events must have required a different Spiritual preparation from the legislator or the warrior; and the legislator or warrior again must have received powers and capacities totally distinct from those conferred on one whose office was to instruct foreigners of various languages in the divine messages.

[d] Acts iii. 12—16. [e] 1 Timothy iii. 16.

There must have been a different class of intellectual faculties enlightened, when the servant of the Most High was appointed to unfold the mystic roll of prophecy, and when his sacred errand was to bear testimony to facts which were matters of ordinary observation and comprehension.

The wide difference between the various kinds of inspired agency would oblige us to take this view of a corresponding variety in the nature and extent of inspiration, supposing there were no express Scriptural assertions of the fact. But Scripture is not silent on the subject. Inspiration is spoken of by inspired authors themselves, as given *severally* and not *collectively;* the single exception being that of him, who only "took on him the form of a servant." To Christ alone, who was God as well as man, the Father gave not the Spirit "by measure[f]," (or partially;) in the case of all others, there has been a measure—a grace sufficient for them and their agency. "The manifestation of the Spirit," writes St. Paul, "is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by

[f] John iii. 34.

the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will[f]:" and again; "God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret[g]?"

Reason and Scripture lead us further to recognise, besides these various inspired qualifications, a distinct divine superintendence; the object of which was, to supply any occasional deficiency in those qualifications; or, I should rather say perhaps, to prevent any defective or improper application of them. The reasonableness of this additional provision rests on the

[f] 1 Corinth. xii. 7—11. [g] Ibid. ver. 28—30.

fallibility of the human agents who were entrusted with inspired powers, but still left (as will appear) free agents, and responsible for the use of them; and the actual existence of such a provision, is proved by the record of instances in which it was manifested.

These two kinds of inspiration or divine help, by means of which the servants of God accomplished each his proper agency, will require to be considered separately. I will begin with the miraculous improvement of the natural powers of the agent.

§. 6. *Miraculous improvement of the natural powers.*

Of the exact extent of this kind of inspiration in any given case, it is impossible for us to be certain. Its results appearing only like the results of human wisdom and human power, no one can say how much was, in any given instance, originally apportioned by God to the individual in his natural condition, and how much was supernatural improvement. Unless we could exactly ascertain, for example, how much natural

talent and mere human acquirement Moses had before his appointment, and how much more was needed for the apparent result of talent and wisdom in the discharge of his sacred duties, we cannot tell how far inspiration was operating in his case. To estimate how much of Paul's eloquence was the result of spiritual assistance, we must first know what Paul's naturally acquired eloquence was. Nor is it needful that the line should be more exactly drawn. It is sufficient to know that God's purpose was fulfilled; and whether much or little, or no improvement of the natural powers of the agent was needed, can make no difference in the character of the ministry—that is, if we admit a superintendence of the Holy Spirit, sanctioning all, and pronouncing that all was good.

It would seem, however, that Providence has, in general, so chosen his natural agents, as to direct the attention of mankind to the fact of divine interposition and a miraculous improvement of their original powers. Moses was the meekest of men; and yet he it was, who was chosen to govern a people prone to discontent and rebellion, and to conduct them in the most ad-

venturous and hardy enterprise on the page of history. The inference designed to be drawn is plain—that it was God who had inspired him with the boldness and hardihood requisite for the purpose. He was, on the other hand, instructed by ordinary means in "all the learning of the Egyptians"—of that people which furnished the ancient world with legislative wisdom; and yet, no one agent of the Almighty is represented as being left so little to the use of his own original wisdom and knowledge. There was scarce one measure of importance in his whole government and guidance of the Israelites, but a special revelation instructed him in it. Can we be blind to the meaning of such a fact, and to the object for which it is recorded? Surely it is God reminding us, that he does not give his glory to another. So, again, the apostles were selected from a low and unlettered class of society, to be the opponents of the wise and the rich and the powerful. Paul is perhaps the only exception among those whose writings we have; and he an exception only as far as regards learning. And what is the tone of his language respecting himself? Is he not on every occasion obtruding on

us the important fact, that his success was effected, not by that learning, but by the power of God manifested through him in miracles and miraculous gifts[f]?

In other instances, disinterested generosity, magnanimity, or some other rare or noble quality, is displayed in such bold relief, as to constitute a marked deviation from the general character of human nature, and to force on us the suggestion of immediate divine influence. An ancient moralist has designated this view of character by the term Heroic[g], as if to denote, that it exists only in an age of imagination and fiction; and we still apply to some shades of it the corresponding epithet Romantic. And yet, in these Scriptural instances of which I am speaking, there is a subdued tone of feeling, a calmness of resolve, and an entire absence of enthusiasm, which at once dispels all suspicion of disordered fancy or over-excited passions. Moses exhibited this when pleading with the Almighty in behalf of a people unthankful to him as well as to God, he refused for their sake the holy privilege of being made

[f] See, e. g. 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4.

[g] Aristotelis Ethic. Nic. lib. vii. c. 1.

the father of a new people unto God[h]. Paul exhibited this, when, like Moses, he declared his wish to be accursed for Israel[i]. These, however, it may be said, are instances of heroic generosity, which if few or none could have attained under ordinary circumstances, all, at least, can sympathize with—it is human nature, or like it. But what shall we say of one who could go through a scene such as Ezekiel describes, in the way that he did, and relate it in the language he has done? "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. *So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded*[k]." We may doubt how much of the prophet's stern composure was the hardy growth of his original

[h] Numb. xiv. [i] Rom. ix. 3. [k] Ezek. xxiv. 15.

nature, and how much arose from the infused strength of Him who inspired him; but human nature alone it could not have been. Need we be expressly told, as Paul has told us in his own case, that Ezekiel was acting under the divine assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness[1]?"

These characteristics of divine influence on the conduct and feelings of the inspired are the more striking, that they by no means imply a general exemption from the ordinary failings and feebleness, and even the grosser vices to which man's corrupt nature is subject. They are characteristic of the *inspired minister's official character*, and arise out of the exercise of qualities given or improved with especial reference to the inspired calling. David, the man after God's own heart—he who, of all the ministers under the old dispensation, is thus represented as fulfilling most perfectly his *official inspired character*—was, we know, from that same record, betrayed into crimes so flagrant, as to draw down on himself

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9. Other striking instances from the New Testament narratives were noticed, when we were considering the internal Proofs of Inspiration. See part i. §. 9. p. 81.

and his people the awful display of divine chastisement.

It does not appear, moreover, that the divine agents were perpetually conscious of the kind of inspiration, of which I am now speaking, beyond, at least, the consciousness which they must have felt of improved ability. Moses, for example, is represented, in his negociations with Pharaoh, and in the discharge of his official duties generally, as acting no otherwise than if his inspired qualifications had been the result of nature or of education. Miraculous assurance was needed, that sufficient grace would be given him; and this being granted, there was no more reason for a perpetual consciousness of this divine help, than there is now to assure us of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in regulating our lives, once proved, as this has been, by miracle. The apostles, it is true, were forbidden to meditate beforehand what defence they were to make before the tribunals of their enemies: still there is no reason to suppose that even in the act of so speaking, they were conscious of more than the exercise of natural powers. It was, in short, the employment of human eloquence and human

reasoning improved and called into appropriate use by the secret operation of the Holy Ghost.

Nor, again, is there any reason to suppose, that, by virtue of this kind of Inspiration alone, the inspired agent was exempted from error in every step he took. His faculties were adequately improved, but not, as far as we can judge, perfected. He was infallibly directed as to the object or purpose for which they were to be exercised; the attainment of that object, the accomplishment of that purpose, was certain; but, as to the several measures pursued by the agent for this end, these appear to have been left, for the most part, to his own discretion. His only consciousness of miraculous interposition (except on extraordinary occasions) was, that, whereas he had been weak or ignorant, now he was strong and well-instructed; and he was the same free agent in the exercise of this his improved nature, as he had been before its miraculous improvement. Moses was provided with prudence, with courage, with political wisdom, and with other attainments requisite for the discharge of his sacred duty; and these were called into exercise by the occasion, and exercised ac-

cording to his discretion. If he directed them aright, no signs of divine interposition appeared; if otherwise, then the Almighty Guide's purpose was secured, by an interference, the nature of which will be more particularly considered by and by. So, likewise, the writers of Scripture had, doubtless, according to the character of their task, their memories quickened, their reasoning powers strengthened, and their talents for authorship generally improved, by inspiration; but they, nevertheless, appear to have exercised their memory, their reasoning powers, their judgment, their taste, and their fancy, with the same absence of conscious interference and control in general, as if they had been uninspired. The infallible guidance of the Church, both in their day and in after times, was sufficiently provided for, by a sensible interposition, whenever this general preparation might have been inadequate for some particular emergency, or was inadequately applied by the fallible human agent who had been entrusted with its use. It is obvious, indeed, to the most careless observer, that their style and other points of authorship are not uniform, as if they had been made merely passive instruments of

inspiration ; but exhibit all the usual peculiarities, which distinguish one uninspired author from another. Xenophon does not differ more from Thucydides, in his style and in the character of his narratives, than St. Luke does from St. John.

§. 7. *Superintendence of the Holy Spirit.*

It is inconceivable that God should interpose miraculous agency for the accomplishment of any object, and then allow his purpose to be defeated through any defect in its application. If this, at least, be so, in any case when the individual entrusted with supernatural power is the only person whose interest is involved in its use, and may be reasonably supposed to forfeit a blessing provided because of his neglect and perverseness ; it cannot be so, on any view we derive from God's known dealings with mankind, when the interests of others are made to depend on the holy Agent's work—certainly not, when the guidance of his Church, and that knowledge of Him by which they will be judged, depends on it.

It is true, that, at this day, it is left apparently to the discretion of every Christian, whether and how far he shall contribute to enlighten with Gospel truth his more ignorant brethren and the heathen; and the way in which one man's good principles and religious knowledge are made to depend on another, is one of the most mysterious and solemn subjects of religious meditation. It is true, that God has spoken to his prophets in such terms as these: "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand[m]." But in these cases, it is part of the original appointment of Providence, that his revelation should be so far left to the responsible use of those entrusted with it; and this fact is, in the one case, the subject of express declaration, in the other is implied in the constitution and condition of his Church. That God should reveal what he intended absolutely to be made known, that He should command what he had predestined to

[m] Ezekiel iii. 18.

come to pass, and not secure his object, is quite a different and an inconceivable case.

The exercise of a divine superintendence then, as part of the scheme of Inspiration, is not only probable, but a necessary result of the appointment of human and fallible beings to be, at the same time, the instruments of God's will, and also, free agents, and responsible for the use of their high and holy trust.

That the fact is so—that the prophets and other inspired servants of the Most High, even after the miraculous improvement of their faculties, were not passive instruments, but instrumental agents, exercising their new powers and acquirements even as they did those derived from nature and education, with a responsible free-will—would seem almost certain, even from the general tenor of their ministry. In their acts and in their writings, (as I have already had occasion to remark,) there is the same individuality of character, the same impress of individual will, as in the acts and writings of uninspired persons.

The assertions of Scripture confirm this view. In the Old Testament we read of Balaam's resistance to the divine will, and of other perverse

or corrupt prophets[n]; in the New, we meet with notices of an abuse of spiritual gifts, which called forth a solemn rebuke and warning from the apostle Paul[o]. That same apostle, in one passage of his writings, represents prophecy as given by the Spirit[p]; in another, reminds the inspired, that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets[q]; and in another, charges Timothy, not to neglect the gift that was given him by prophecy[r]. St. Peter asserts, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost[s];" and yet subjoins allusions to false prophets, such as "Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness," and "was rebuked for his iniquity[t]."

Why the Almighty should have chosen this method of communicating with mankind—why he should have selected an imperfect channel for his oracles, which it would require a further in-

[n] See, for example, the account of Jonah, and that given in 1 Kings xiii. of the prophet of Bethel and the man of God that came from Judah.

[o] 1 Cor. xiv. 26. [p] 1 Cor. xii. 10. [q] 1 Cor. xiv. 32.
[r] 1 Tim. iv. 14. [s] 2 Pet. i. 21. [t] 2 Pet. ii. 15, 16.

terposition to correct or perfect, rather than address us by instruments at once constituted infallible, is a speculation which belongs not to my argument. If the fact be as it has been stated, we are only tempting ourselves astray from the profitable consideration of it, by presumptuously calling in question its wisdom. It is doubtless wisest and best that it should have been so, whether or no we are able to comprehend the wisdom and goodness of the scheme. And this, at least, we can understand, that to us it could have made no difference, whether, like the natural machinery of the universe, that of Revelation had been made self-sufficient, or, (as was the case,) so as to require the hand of superintending Providence to direct and regulate its movements. It is God's appointment, (and very serious reflections should it awaken in every Christian, on the share of duty that thereby devolves on him,) that in the whole scheme of his dealings with mankind, man should be the agent of his mercy to man. In the last dispensation, this ordinance, if before imperfectly developed, has been set forth in the most explicit language; and is represented indeed as the characterising

principle of the Gospel law. Mankind were, in the first place, to be redeemed by "the Son of man." The redeemed were, by a further enactment, made partakers of spiritual help and sanctification, only as members one of another—associates in a confederacy, wherein all are friends and brethren, and communion with God must begin from communion with one another. Instead of some awful revolution in the state of heaven and earth, in which, a recognition of the immediate presence of the universal Lord and Creator, might have awakened the whole world from apathy or error, to confess, and adore, and obey Him; all nations were appointed to be added to the Church through the missionary exertions of his human angels and their successors. God's immediate manifestation extended but to the few who commenced the work. He gave but the seed, and left it to germinate and grow into the tree; he cast in but the little leaven, and counted on its leavening the whole mass. It is in strict accordance with all this, and one portion of the scheme, that, for the great provision of a recorded revelation, man was the appointed agent. God the Holy Ghost only superintended his

work, and saw and pronounced that it was good.

The way in which this divine superintendence was manifested was probably not uniform; and the occasional suggestion or prohibition which arose out of it might have been communicated, sometimes, like the original revelations, by vision, or voice, or dream. Such certainly was the case with Balaam's rebuke. That form of communication, however, which has been denoted by the phrase "instinctive impulse," would seem from its character to have been oftenest applicable to this purpose. When, for example, Paul and his companions are described as first "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia," and afterwards "not suffered to go into Bithynia[u]," it is not said whether the prohibitions were given by a dream, or how; but such an *instinctive impulse* might have been sufficient to make the apostle feel that his purpose was not agreeable to the will of the Spirit.

In whatever way, however, the inspiration of superintendence operated, it is distinguished from the miraculous improvement of the natural

[u] Acts xvi. 6, 7.

powers of the agent in some important points. According to the old metaphysicians, man's soul consists of two great constituent parts—the *governing* and the *governed*. Whilst therefore that inspiration for any holy agency, which consisted in a miraculous improvement of the faculties, affected chiefly the latter, the inspiration of superintendence must, for the most part, have been addressed to the governing principle; or rather, for the time, must have superseded and suspended its authority. When the servant of the Most High, although qualified by a miraculous improvement of his powers for his task, was yet, by some emergency, brought into doubt, or became liable to error, or forgetfulness—whenever, in short, his own powers, natural and inspired, were in danger of being misdirected, or feebly exerted—God assumed the extraordinary direction of them, or improved the strength and energy which were lacking

It follows from this, that, as a further feature of distinction, the inspiration which consisted in a miraculous improvement of the natural powers, could not be appealed to as conferring *authority* on what the agent did or said. It was

given to him for *assistance*, not for *authority*. The inspiration of superintendence, and the original commission or revelation, constituted the warrant on which he required obedience, or unqualified assent, from those to whom he ministered. Paul, for example, continued to exercise his highly improved powers no less when giving advice to the Corinthians respecting the expediency of their marrying, than when instructing them in the duty of not divorcing their wives; but to his advice on the former point, as it formed no part of the original Gospel he had received, or of the interference of the superintending inspiration under which he wrote, he is careful to add, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." When he proceeds to speak concerning divorces, he as distinctly asserts the divine authority of his words; this having been rendered requisite by the former exception: "I command, yet not I, but the Lord[x]."

The respective uses and characteristics of these two kinds of inspiration may be illustrated thus. A state or monarch sends an ambassador abroad.

[x] 1 Cor. vii.

In order to qualify him for his embassy, he is instructed in the language of the country, provided, perhaps, with the coins of the country, and supplied with other *facilities*. These advance the object of his embassy; but in a very different way from the sovereign's commission, and the letters of authority which he carries with him—they confer on him, in short, *power*, but not *authority*. Now these *facilities* correspond to that inspiration which consists in improved talents; whilst the original revelation, and the occasional suggestions and checks of the inspiration of superintendence, may be represented; the first, by the sovereign's commission, the latter, by the dispatches which he, from time to time, might have sent to his ambassador.

Such being the use and nature of the superintending inspiration, it is obviously a point of all others the most important to fix on the extent of its operation. If on its operation depends the authority of any inspired ministry, it must be quite essential for the guidance of those who are the objects of that ministry, to know what are the points that are to be considered as bearing the impress of its sanction.

In our own case, this inquiry should, of course, be principally directed to the authority of the Scriptures, inasmuch as they comprise that portion of the ministry of God's inspired agents which claim his authority over us ; and on the distinct consideration of this we shall presently enter. On the general question, therefore, how far the Inspiration of Superintendence controlled inspired agents, the less need be said here. The obvious principle, which regulated its extent, may in general terms be stated to be, the accomplishment of the particular purpose for which the divine commission was given, and not beyond this. Its extent must thus have corresponded to one's own part in the authorship of a letter, the composition of which has been entrusted to another, furnished for that purpose with general directions what to say. If this letter be afterwards revised and corrected, as far as needful, by him for whom it was written ; his part in the performance may perhaps not unfitly represent the interference of the Holy Spirit in the writing of the Scriptures. Or we may take another illustration. A physician gives particular directions to his patient, and exercises also a general superintendence over his

diet and habits of life; but these directions and this superintendence leave the patient still at liberty to live in many respects according to his own discretion—in all respects, namely, except the doing of such things as might prevent the success of the physician's plan of treatment. The extent of God's interference in the inspired agency of his servants would seem naturally to have been regulated on a similar principle; and the particular investigation of the fact, as far as relates to the Scriptures, will confirm this view.

PART III.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

§. 1. *General principles for deciding the authority of any Scripture.*

GOD who in times past addressed his Church by his inspired messengers and by the one mediator his Son, addresses us now by his Scriptures. The practical question, therefore, to which the foregoing inquiry brings us, is, What authority belongs to the Bible in consequence of its inspiration?

It has appeared that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration;" inasmuch as we recognise, besides positive revelation, a miraculous improvement of the author's powers for the whole of his task, and also a superintending divine agency. But, how are we to determine what

portions of the sacred volume are characterised by one kind of inspiration, and what by the other? Are we to suppose that this superintendence extended to all the authorship? or, if confined to some particular portions, what were these? Wherever its interference is acknowledged, the authority of Scripture must, from its nature, be certain and infallible: but, in its absence, even positive revelations received by an author, may, from inaccuracy of memory, or error of observation, (setting aside the possibility of intentional misrepresentation,) fail to ensure his giving an accurate representation of them.

Scripture has not left us to conjecture on so important a point; which would indeed imply, that its divine Author had provided us with a heavenly gift, without instructing us how to use it. The Bible contains many passages declaratory of the criterion by which its inspiration must be judged. "All Scripture," writes St. Paul, (and what was true of *all* Scripture then, must be intended to apply to that he was then composing, and to all further additions,) "is given by inspiration, and is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in*

righteousness[a]." In other words, to religious instruction of whatever kind is confined the Scriptural character of Scripture—the agency of the Holy Spirit. The same test is elsewhere spoken of as applicable to the apostolical ministry generally, and is commonly expressed by the term edification[b]. It is not, therefore, truth of all kinds that the Bible was inspired to teach, but only such truth as tends to religious edification; and the Bible is consequently infallible as far as regards this, and this alone. The Saviour's promise to his apostles (as is evident from their own view of the assistance they were receiving) was not, that he would guide them into all truth whatever, but into all such truth. Indeed the expression, which is translated "all truth," might (as every one who understands the original is aware) be rendered with equal fidelity, and I should say with more propriety, "all *the* truth[c]"—"*the* truth" being a phrase often employed by our Saviour to designate the Christian scheme.

Accordingly, if we wish to determine the authority of any assertion or direction in Scrip-

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 16. [b] E. g. 2 Cor. xii. 19. x. 8. xiii. 10.

[c] πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. John xvi. 13.

ture, the rule which Scripture itself furnishes is, that, as far as it is religious instruction, it is infallible; as far as it is not, its authority is that which attaches to the work of an honest and sincere author, and varies according to his individual circumstances, and the circumstances of the country and age in which he wrote.

§. 2. *Historical and other statements of facts.*

When, for example, Moses, in relating the history of the Creation, speaks of the sun being set in the firmament [b], his authority for the astronomical truth is only human, the religious truth involved in it is, that God created and appointed the sun its sphere; and in this the authority of Moses is infallible. In St. Luke's Gospel [c], Herodias is described as the wife of *Philip* the tetrarch Herod's brother; Josephus represents the brother of the tetrarch as likewise called *Herod.* The religious truth here remains unchanged, whichever of these assertions be correct; and accordingly we may safely leave the question to be decided, as if

[b] Gen. i. 17. [c] Chap. iii. 19.

both authors were alike uninspired, the *inspiration* of the Evangelist not being at all affected by the issue. St. Matthew relates the cure of a leper by Jesus as he came down from a mountain, and before he had entered into Capernaum; St. Luke's account is, that Jesus was in Capernaum at the time, and withdrew after the miracle into the wilderness[d]. In this instance there is an apparent contradiction between the statements of two inspired writers; but clearly *not in that respect in which they were inspired.* The essential circumstances of the miracle, the religious instruction conveyed, remains the same, and the inspiration of the author is unimpeached, whether the contradiction be owing to a lapse of memory in one, (the point being too unimportant to call for the divine interposition to correct it,) or be only apparent and admit of explanation[e].

[d] Matt. viii. compared with Luke v.

[e] The same remark will apply to the account of a blind man healed by Jesus as given by Mark and Luke. According to Mark (x. 46.) it took place as Jesus was going *out* of Jericho, whilst Luke represents him as going *into* Jericho when he performed it. There are several other instances of the same kind. See note to Dr. Whately's Ninth Essay on the Difficulties of St. Paul, p. 313.

At the same time that the Holy Spirit should have allowed his agents to commit abundant or gross errors, beyond their age and circumstances, *on any subject*, must be felt as a supposition derogatory to the character of an inspired work; and inasmuch as it would have brought discredit on the Scripture, was, doubtless, provided against by that general improvement of talent, which has been recognised as one branch of inspiration. Indeed, the same extent of superintendence may, not unreasonably, be claimed even for their style and grammatical propriety, when we consider, how much the work of any inspired author would have lost in estimation—how much suspicion it would have excited—if it had displayed all the worst faults of a rude and unlettered attempt to write.

The labours of those, accordingly, who have endeavoured to vindicate the Scriptures from apparent mistakes on subjects of natural science; and still more of those who have sought to reconcile their assertions of historical facts with those of profane history and of each other, are not to be considered as useless or unimportant. Only let us never allow the question of inspira-

tion to depend on the full success of such a vindication. Scripture does not claim these views and facts as part of the subject-matter of its infallible inspiration; and the consequence of claiming this character for them is not unfrequently to awaken suspicion, and to create disbelief of all inspiration. And this feeling operates perhaps the most fatally when it is least likely to be expressed. It is not the philosopher pining in a dungeon that exhibits the worst results of such a system. Bigotry can do more than bind the strong man—she can beguile him of that holy strength which resists her worst bondage—she can bring him to conform and be indifferent. The well known protest which appears on the pages of the celebrated French edition of Newton[f], is after all a more melancholy record than the history of Gallileo's imprisonment. It exhibits that unresisting acquiescence which results from a want

[f] Newtonus in hoc tertio libro telluris motæ hypothesim assumit. Auctoris propositiones aliter explicari non poterant, nisi eâdem quoque factâ hypothesi. Hinc alienam coacti sumus gerere personam. Cæterum latis a summis Pontificibus contra telluris motum decretis nos obsequi profitemur.

of faith, and an indifference to the object of it—it is the submission of the strong man when his locks have been shorn.

§. 3. *Doctrines and precepts.*

The foregoing remarks have been directed to the mode in which the test of infallibility may be applied to a narrative of events or a statement of facts in the Bible. But Scripture, whilst it exhibits our religion as founded on facts and events, comprises a great deal more. Its authors were employed not only as historians and witnesses, but as expositors of the great historical picture of God's dealings and revelations—in exhorting, commanding, and reasoning with us—in giving us precepts and principles for regulating our behaviour, as individuals, and as a church.

To all this *didactic* portion of Scripture, the same test is appropriate, which has been applied to the historical department. Infallible authority must here too depend on some religious view being involved, some reference to God's appointments being implied. The direction of Paul to Timothy

to bring his cloak, books, and parchments[g], and his advice to him to "use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities[h]," are written indeed by an inspired person, and one who must so far have communicated the character of inspiration to all he wrote, as his talents for writing were made adequate to his holy calling, but derive no infallibility from this circumstance—no religious view is involved. When, on the other hand, he directs the same Timothy to "lay hands suddenly on no man[i]," asserts that "God was manifest in the flesh[k]," or tells him, "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also[l]"—the subject, in each instance, belongs to religion, and his words, accordingly, become the words of God.

And yet, (it may be suggested,) in the intercourse which subsisted between such a writer as St. Paul, and the Church, may we not suppose, that his advice was often asked on points, relating indeed to the Church or to the conduct

[g] 2 Tim. iv. 13. [h] 1 Tim. iv. 23. [i] 1 Tim. iv. 22.
[k] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [l] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

of individual members—connected, in short, with religion—but not designed by the Holy Spirit to be certainly and for ever decided one way or the other? Such cases did undoubtedly occur; and let us observe the apostle's careful avoidance of allowing the advice he so gave to be mixed up with the words of revelation and infallible wisdom. Whenever the subject itself is such as might lead the reader to suppose that his views were controlled by the superintending Spirit of God, the fact being otherwise, he puts in an express caution that it is he, Paul, and not the Lord, who is speaking [m]. And this was doubtless the rule of his ministry in preaching as well as in writing. The same principle which made him so eager to disclaim divine worship and honour when offered to his person [n], necessarily led him to reject the character of holy infallibity, when he was employing his own human wisdom.

Indeed, if we may draw an inference from one instance placed on record, the apostles and their coadjutors probably had, from time to time, salutary proofs and admonitions of the need there was thus expressly to caution those to

[m] See 1 Cor. vii. [n] Acts xiv. 15.

whom they were conveying the messages of God, not to confound with these their own uninspired suggestions. When Paul took his solemn and affecting farewell of the elders at Miletus, (as recorded in the twentieth chapter of the Acts,) the most distressing circumstance in their parting was, that he told them they should see his face no more. It appears likely from other parts of the New Testament, that this desponding presage was not fulfilled. He did certainly return to Asia Minor, and even to Miletus[1]. Was his inspired character then affected by the result? By no means. The narrative is, that not Paul himself, but *others* "in every city," were inspired to say that bonds awaited him. Thus much, and no more, the Holy Spirit revealed. The further comment was his own. And there was so good reason, according to all human probability, for apprehending the worst, as fully to explain the melancholy foreboding of the apostle and his friends, without supposing either party to have regarded as inspired prophecy, expressions which, in the parting hour of friends, have been again

[1] See note in the Appendix.

and again suggested by the very uncertainty of the future.

§. 4. *The reasoning of Scriptural writers.*

The application of the test proposed, then, to all that a Scriptural writer asserts or enjoins, seems clear and certain. Whenever the assertion or injunction involves any doctrine, any moral or religious truth, or, in short, has any bearing on religion, so far it must be considered as infallible and unquestionable. But it may not be so readily granted, that when there is *reasoning* as well as assertion and command, the infallibility which attaches to the assertion must likewise attach to the premises. For, (it may be urged,) if the assertion or command is to rest on the authority of the writer's inspiration, what purpose can argument serve? The miraculous evidence for inspiration supersedes and takes the place of that reasoning which would otherwise be needful to prove or to enforce the writer's words. "When divine writers," observes Bishop Burnet, "argue upon any point, we are always bound

to believe the conclusions that these reasonings end in, as parts of divine revelation ; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even assent to, all the premises made use of by them ; unless it appears plainly that they affirm the premises as expressly, as they do the conclusions proved by them[k]." Paley holds the like language: "In reading the apostolic writings, we distinguish between their doctrines and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation, properly so called; yet in propounding these doctrines in their writings or discourses, they were wont to illustrate, support, and enforce them, by such analogies, arguments, and considerations, as their own thoughts suggested. Thus the call of the Gentiles, that is, the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian profession, without a previous subjection to the law of Moses, was imparted to the apostles by revelation, and was attested by the miracles, which attended the Christian ministry amongst them. The apostles' own assurance of the matter rested upon this foundation. The doctrine itself must be received; but it is not necessary, in order to defend Chris-

[k] Burnet on the XXXIX Articles, Art. VI.

tianity, to defend the propriety of every comparison, or the validity of every argument, which the apostle has brought into the discussion. The same observation applies to some other instances[l]."

The argument so stated wears, it must be confessed, a great show of plausibility, and I was induced by it to concede the point, in some hints which I formerly threw out on the subject, and to apply the view of Burnet and Paley to the apostles' reasoning from the prophecies of the Old Testament[m]. An anxious and renewed consideration of the question has since led me to doubt the justness of it, on the ground, that it is hardly consistent with the dignity of Scripture to suppose the writers left *liable* to any false reasoning, or to any mistaken application of old prophecy: *liable*, I say, because the question is not really one of fact, as the Bible may be confidently defended against the charge of actual error of either kind.

The true statement appears to be this. All reasoning must proceed from something known

[l] Paley's Evidences, vol. ii. part iii. chap. 2.

[m] Appendix to History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity.

to something unknown or less known; or else, however true both premises and conclusion may be, it is useless. It is clear, therefore, that if any one not only infallibly knows, but is understood and allowed infallibly to know, that which he is asserting, all reasoning in support of his assertion is superfluous. But it should be borne in mind, that although to us the premises, the reasoning, and the conclusions of an inspired writer are alike known to be infallible, because they are all recognised as the result of infallible inspiration;—although the same must have been the case with those more immediately addressed in the sacred writings;—still, those writings were doubtless designed to work conviction in many also who did not yet admit their inspiration, or full inspiration—on unbelievers, or on those who were wavering and undecided about the truth of Christianity. What St. Paul directs to be done in his Epistle to the Corinthians [n], in the case of speaking a foreign language, interpreting, and prophesying, involves the principle, on which he may reasonably be supposed to have performed his own ministry in preaching

[n] I Cor. xiv. 23—25.

and in writing. In the latter, especially, he was, as a Scriptural author, addressing always other persons, other ages and places, as well as those nominally and primarily addressed. He was framing an instrument of instruction, which was to last when miracles had ceased; and which might possibly, even in his own day, have proved effectual among many whom miracles had not yet reached. Many, too, there must have been, even of those who had an opportunity of witnessing miracles, who were likely to be more readily attracted, in the first instance, by an appeal to their understandings, than by a public display of signs and wonders addressed to the senses. On all such an apostle's infallible reasoning must have taken effect, precisely in the same manner as his miraculous gift of eloquence. It must have produced the natural results of sound reasoning; and must have been convincing, not because it was known to be inspired, but because it was understood to be conclusive. *We* know that the apostle's application of prophecy was infallible; but such persons would allow the argument founded on this application, not because they admitted his inspiration and infallibility, but

because their own understandings recognised the application. And such a supposition is, in fact, strongly confirmed by the character of the apostolic reasoning; which turns, almost exclusively, on the fulfilment of ancient prophecy and type—the natural source of argument intended for the conviction of the Jews dispersed throughout the world; who, if satisfied with the application of their prophecies, would at once recognise in it evidence as truly miraculous, as the exhibition of signs and wonders.

But, whatever may be thought of this explanation—supposing we were to consider the inspired reasoning of apostles and others as designed solely for believers in its inspiration—even so, it may have pleased our divine Instructor, for some ends unknown to us, to accomplish his purpose not uniformly, but by a variety of means—by sometimes inspiring his agents with the truths to be asserted; and sometimes providing them with the premises and reasoning, by the use of which they were to arrive infallibly at such truths. Why should we scruple to admit this view; when it is obvious, that in the works of creation, there is not one uniform method of accomplishing nature's

ends, but many different processes, and some more direct than others[o]? There is even an apparent object attained by this variety in the mode of instructing the Church through its inspired teachers. Although in their own case, simple assertion of doctrine might have been sufficient to secure assent from believers; still their uninspired successors were to employ reasoning both in propagating and in enforcing divine truth; and it might have been needful with a view to their ministry—to the perpetual and established procedure of the Church—that an example should have been set, a precedent given, by inspired teachers. These extraordinary ministers were instructors and guides, it should be remembered, not of the Church merely, but of the Church's future instructors and guides. Their commission was not only themselves to teach the

[o] "According to our manner of conception, God makes use of variety of means, what we often think tedious ones, in the natural course of providence, for the accomplishment of all his ends. Indeed it is certain there is somewhat in this matter quite beyond our comprehension; but the mystery is as great in nature as in Christianity." Butler's Analogy, part ii. chap. 4.

Gospel, but so to commit the same to their successors that they too might be able to teach others [p]. Like their Lord and Master, they were examples as well as teachers—examples to future teachers and guides of the Church—and the wisdom of God may be reasonably supposed to have directed them to do, as their Lord had done, many things that were needful, not so much for themselves, as for a pattern to us.

§. 5. *Modifications arising from the character of the Mosaic institution.*

Enough, perhaps, has now been stated to enable us to conclude, that the test of infallible authority in Scripture, (viz. its reference to God or his appointments,) is applicable to all the various kinds of composition of which the Bible is made up—to its history, and to its doctrinal instruction, as well as to that portion which I have not thought it necessary particularly to notice—its unfulfilled prophecy. It is plain, too, that this test is applicable, whether the author is

[p] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

merely asserting, or obtains his conclusion by a process of reasoning; whether he is expounding events, or fixing the application of any prophecy.

Of this general statement there is, however, one obvious modification. It arises from the fulfilment of some portions of the Mosaic law, and the abrogation of others—the fulfilment of those directions which had a prophetic meaning, the annulment of those which related to the Jews as a civil society, and which were inspired indeed, and of infallible authority *to them*, but have lost that authority now by the Law becoming merged in the Gospel. So obvious an exception might seem hardly to require a specific notice, were it not notorious how often it has been denied or overlooked. The scruples of numbers in the Church for many centuries respecting the obligation to observe portions of the ceremonial law are well known; nor have the civil ordinances of the Israelites been exempt from being confounded, by a like misplaced respect, with the eternal and universal laws of the God of Israel. The command to provide for the Levites, by setting apart a tithe of the produce of the country, has scarcely yet ceased to be insisted on by some, as applicable

to the *mode* of maintaining the ministers of religion in all ages. It may be said, however, that this ordinance partook more of a religious than of a civil character. The influence of the law against usury, therefore, is an illustration more to the purpose; and it is one which I mention more especially, because it gives me occasion to notice two remarkable instances, in which, as in the declaration of the French editors of the Principia, an attempt to extend the authority of religion to matters out of its province, has subjected it to a contemptuous compliment, really more injurious to it than open insult and blasphemy. In a statute passed during the reign of James the First, for regulating the rate of interest—in other words, for legalizing that, which was illegal according to the Law of Moses—it was thought necessary to introduce a clause, disavowing any intention of sanctioning usury in opposition to the word of God. The other instance, to which I allude, is one of more modern date. Mr. Neckar, in his *Eloge* on Colbert, makes the following *amende* to the authority of Scripture, for having denied the justice and expediency of usury laws; " Ce que je

dis de l'interêt est sons un point de vue politique, et n'a point de rapport avec *les respectables maximes de la religion* sur ce point."

§. 6. *Cautions respecting the application of the foregoing views.*

It is further important to bear in mind, that the principle, which excludes any portion of Scripture from the claim to infallibility, is not that the subject is profane history, or natural philosophy—the actions and motives of man, or the laws and phænomena of the universe—but that *the assertion respecting these points involves no religious view.* It does not, accordingly, authorize us to attribute to natural causes any apparently natural event or phænomenon, which an inspired author has represented as miraculous, on the ground that *the subject* lies out of the sphere of his inspiration. The very circumstance of an inspired author attributing any result to miraculous interference, constitutes the subject forthwith religious, and obliges us to recognise such a spiritual superintendence as must have given infallibility to his assertions. The sacred writer

may, without any disparagement to his inspired character, be supposed to have mistaken one natural cause for another; but to imagine him capable of representing a natural cause in the light of a miracle, or a miracle in the light of a natural cause, confounds and overthrows the view of inspiration as an infallible guide; and is inconsistent with such a superintending divine agency as has been asserted for all Scripture. Suppose, for example, the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites could be fully explained by some theory of the ebbing and flowing of its tides; this ought not, in the slightest degree, to affect our belief that the Israelites passed, and the Egyptians were drowned, by a miracle: because in the Scripture narrative the scene is described as miraculous[r]. Suppose it ascertained that the desert, through which the Israelites wandered, yields naturally a substance, which can almost be identified with the manna on which they subsisted; the assertion of Scripture, that it was through God's extraordinary interference that they were supplied with it, obliges us to attribute the

[r] Exodus xiv. 21—31.

formation of that manna to a miracle[s]. For the Israelites, indeed, it was necessary, that the inadequacy, or, at least, the absence, of natural causes should have been apparent from the circumstances themselves; but *we* are bound, independently of such considerations, independently of any argument founded on the quantity of manna produced, or on circumstances which preclude the possibility of natural causes having operated on the waters of the Red Sea, to admit the miracle in each case; that is, if we have admitted, in the first instance, the inspiration of the historian who so represents these facts. Suppose, again, the mere human wisdom of a great national leader was likely to have suggested a discipline of forty years' toil and privation for a degenerate host, destined to win a settlement by conquest; if Scripture tells us, that in the case of the Israelites it was a punishment inflicted by divine command[t], to God we are bound to ascribe

[s] See Exod. xvi. especially ver. 4. and 32. Compare also with the narrative the allusions to it in other Scriptures; for example, Psalm lxxviii. 23, 24, 25. where it is called "the corn of heaven," and "angels' food."

[t] See Numbers xiv. 28—35. Deuteronomy ii. 14, 15.

the otherwise seeming device of man. What avails it to prove that there have been hail-stones in natural storms, sufficient to have destroyed armies, as was that of the Amorites[u]? or, that the jaws and stomach of any fish are naturally so capacious as to admit and contain a man, as the whale did Jonah[x]? Scripture tells us, that in these particular instances the events came to pass by miraculous interference; and whether in the course of nature similar events have occurred or not—ever could occur or not—is a question altogether irrelevant, when we are considering our obligation to view these events related in Scripture as miracles.

§. 7. *Uninspired authority.*

As far as regards the object proposed in this inquiry, the inquiry might rest here. The proofs requisite for establishing inspiration, the nature and the extent of that holy interference, and the

[u] Joshua x. 11. See also ver. 8. where the miraculousness of the event is further implied by the prophecy that foretold it.

[x] Jonah i. 17.

authority which the Bible especially derives from it, all these points have now been successively examined. Still the application of the whole view will be incomplete, unless, together with the estimate of inspired authority, we make an estimate likewise of the character and authority which may attach to mere human compositions. It is not enough to have ascertained and admitted the claims of Scripture. Those claims may be injured, not only by ignorance or denial of them, but by communicating them to other writings. The rash critic, who deals with the word of God as if it proceeded from man alone, is not the only profaner of the oracles of the "jealous God." To raise human compositions to a level with Scripture is practically the same, as to bring down Scripture to the level of uninspired authorship; even as it is practically the same thing, whether we dig down an eminence, or raise the adjacent ground to its level. We censure the enthusiast for confounding inspiration with the suggestions of his own mind, and regard his notions as impious and blasphemous; and we are perhaps justified in our censure. But how does his impiety or blasphemy differ from his, who appeals

indifferently to Scripture and to any human authority, however sanctified by time and circumstances? Surely the only difference is, that, in the one case, an uninspired person usurps that authority which God has conferred, by inspiration, on apostles, and prophets, and others his commissioned agents; whilst, in the other case, it is that same authority conferred likewise by inspiration on the Scriptures, which is usurped by uninspired writings. The enthusiast, in short, insults the majesty of God speaking through his living servants, the other insults Him, as speaking through their writings. It is the characteristic of a protestant Church not merely to deny the authority of any man to "speak as God;" but the authority of any man's writings to speak as the Scriptures of God.

The charge of placing on a level traditional divinity and Scripture is most strictly applicable, it is true, to the Romanists. But let us not suppose, that, provided only we do not equal their folly and wickedness in degree, we cannot be implicated at all in their guilt[y]. The builders of this Babel of human pride and strength may raise

[y] See Whately's "Errors of Romanism," ch. iv.

the tower, some nearer than others, to the heavens; but the first stone constitutes the offence. Whenever we appeal, on questions of faith and duty, to human authority, for the same purpose as we do to Scripture—whenever we seek to *prove*, in short, the correctness of our faith by man's word—it is not requisite that we should place it on an exact level with Scripture in order to incur the guilt of dividing our allegiance between the human and the divine author. We have forthwith violated the distinct and sovereign character of the Bible; and, like Israel worshipping the golden calf which their own hands had made, we plead in vain that we have done it in honour of Jehovah—in solemn acknowledgment of the supreme authority of his word.

In truth, much practical error has been fostered, if not caused, in this instance, by the ambiguity of a word. We speak of the *authority* of the Scriptures, the *authority* of the Church, the *authority* of the fathers and orthodox divines of later ages, meaning throughout these several applications of the word *authority*, a claim on Christians or Churchmen to assent to the decisions of Scripture—of the Church—of fathers and other

theologians; but implying (if we speak correctly) not merely a difference of degree in that claim, but a different kind of claim in each. The *authority* of a Church is *power*—(such as that of an executive government)—vested in it by virtue of its divine institution, for the purpose of administering the Scriptural laws of Christ's kingdom on earth. The *authority* of the fathers, and of other uninspired theologians, is that influence which belongs to *testimony;* and has, accordingly, the same weight in deciding any doubtful application of Scripture, as the authority of one versed in history would have in an historical question, or of a critic in a question of criticism; and must vary infinitely, according to the learning, the talents, the age, and other circumstances of the author. The *authority* of Scripture is different again from both—it is analogous to the authority of a law or of the charter of a civil constitution. It is, in fact, the law, in the administering of which the Church exercises its proper authority; it is the law, for the interpretation of which the proper authority of the fathers and of other theologians is called in, as precedents are appealed to in our courts of justice. We com-

monly indeed apply the term Church not only, as I have here applied it, to an ecclesiastical constitution, but also to the fathers, and other eminent theologians; and speak of their authority, as of the authority of the Church, thus adding one more ambiguity to the language employed on the subject, and contributing of course still further to embarras and confuse the prevailing opinions about authority, by the various kindred significations of the term.

Still, it will be urged, has not the Church—the ecclesiastical body—a right to set forth Articles, Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms? and are we not to appeal to these, at least, as authority? Undoubtedly we are; and so we may, likewise, appeal to the authority of the fathers and of uninspired divines. All that I would point out is, that we cannot properly, in all the cases enumerated, appeal to the same kind of authority, or for the same purpose. The purpose of a Church's Articles, and other similar documents, is to express a particular interpretation of Scripture and of the will of God, in which interpretation all agree who are members of that particular Church. They constitute the marks which distinguish that

Church from all other Christian bodies, that are so at variance with it, as to be excluded from its communion; and the adherence to any Church implies the adoption of these its peculiar views. If, therefore, the question be, whether a Christian can remain in communion with his Church, its Articles are the proper test; and the rulers of the Church are the persons, whose province it is to make use of this criterion. The question is, in fact, a judicial one; the one party being the legal judges, the other amenable to their inquiry and decision. If, again, the question be, whether any doctrine be correct or erroneous—or rather, if the very same question be handled as a subject of discussion between the members of any Church, and neither party be official judges of the other—if, in short, the truth or falsity of any assertion be the topic of *private controversy*—for settling this the appropriate and sole appeal is to the Scriptures. The authority of the fathers, lastly, and indeed of any esteemed theologians, may be called in, not only as testimony to historical facts relative to the prevailing opinions of the Church in their age, but for the purpose of confirming private judgment, or the

judgment of the Church, on any matter that admits of question. In short, our faith is to be *proved* from Scripture only[y]; our right to enjoy communion with a Church is to be decided according to our conformity with its Articles and Canons; and both the decisions of the Church, and the private judgment of its members, admit alike of being *confirmed* or rendered suspicious, by calling in the testimony of uninspired writers and uninspired Churches of other times and countries.

It was probably on this principle that Mr. Daillè designed to rest Christian liberty, in his celebrated publication, while the disputes between the Romish and the reformed Churches were yet warmly agitated, and the very sources of appeal still a question. That zealous opponent of the Romish Church contented himself, however, with exposing in detail the fallibility of the ancient fathers; and by leaving the principle itself undefined, produced an impression on many of his readers, not so much that the authority of the fathers was some-

[y] See Hawkins on Tradition; and the whole of chap. iv. of Whately's Errors of Romanism. Both should, indeed, be not only read, but studied.

thing different in kind from that of Scripture, as that their opinions carried with them no authority in any sense of the term [z]. Hence the question still perpetually led the advocates of either side into a vindication of a false position. The association between ideas expressed by one common term, and connected moreover by common links of thought, has undoubtedly a tendency to restore the original prejudice, so warmly assailed, but never satisfactorily removed. Still, experience of the enormous evils resulting from the recognition of any human authority, in the same sense of the term as that in which we apply it to the Scriptural claims, has had a salutary and lasting effect on Protestants generally. In the case of our own Church, the very principle of distinction which has been here insisted on, is recognized by its Articles. The sixth Article declares, not that the framers merely had proved all asserted in these Articles from Scripture; but that "whatsoever is not read therein,

[z] An anecdote is recorded of Bp. Fleetwood replying to some one who asked his opinion about the book, that "he thought the author had pretty sufficiently proved that they were of no use at all."

nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith." Here an authority is asserted for Scripture such as belongs to *a law*. Again, in Articles eighth, nineteenth, and twenty-first, the proper authority which belongs to Creeds and Councils, as well as to Churches of other times and places, is no less plainly marked. In the twentieth and thirty-fourth Articles, lastly, the Church's authority in the sense of power, and right of judicial decision, is maintained in terms the most definite and guarded; and the distinct province of Scripture once more asserted. "The Church hath *power* to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation."

Never can Scriptural inspiration have its authority duly recognised, unless this distinction be

scrupulously and sacredly observed. The Scriptures are the sole test of our faith, whenever the question is, whether our faith be correct or not; they are the sole oracle, which we may lawfully consult, if ever doubt and difficulty respecting "the way and the truth" beset us. To have recourse to the self-constituted prophets of the nations, as well as to those of Israel inspired of God, was not, of old, to make security more secure; but rather, to tempt God to deliver the applicant over to the delusion of a lying spirit. When we too are using man's wisdom, for purposes to which God has adapted and appropriated his Scriptures—we, in like manner, may seem to ourselves to be gaining additional light, when we are perhaps only darkening our understandings. The Papist invokes the aid of departed saints, in addition to that of his Saviour; and urges in defence of the practice, that he does all that the Protestant does, and more; and that he never supposes or implies by the practice, that the intercession of a saint is so efficacious as that of the one great Mediator. What better plea has the Protestant, who, while he charges the Romanist with error, is himself appealing indifferently to human autho-

rity and to the Scriptures—is himself canonizing not the men indeed, but their writings—and maintaining, all the while, that he never supposes or implies that the authority of the two is equal? Surely, in both cases alike, the error and the mischief consists, in making appeals of the *same kind* to man and to God—in giving Jehovah's glory to another.

This abuse requires to be the more sedulously guarded against, because its true character is generally disguised from those who practise it. Men never avow, even to themselves, that uninspired documents are used by them as if they were inspired. The impiety, which, if seen, would startle and alarm them, is kept out of sight, by their investing the human idol with an intermediate and vague character—by their imagining a gradual and imperceptible waning, as it were, of the holy light of inspiration, from the pages of prophets and apostles, through the works of succeeding teachers of divine truth—a kind of spiritual twilight, breaking the abruptness of the departing glory, instead of one strongly marked line which alone we are authorized and bound to draw between writings whose authority has been

attested by miracles, and all, without exception, not so attested. How different was the scruple of that very age, to which this authority is ascribed, as represented in the words of an ancient writer. "They who are now called bishops were originally called apostles; but the holy apostles being dead, they who were ordained after them to govern the Church could not arrive at the excellency of the first; nor had they the testimony of miracles, but were in many other respects inferior to them. Therefore, they thought it not decent to assume to themselves the name of apostles; but dividing the names, they left to presbyters the name of the presbytery, and they themselves were called bishops[z]." They themselves would not assume even the empty titles; and shall we presume to invest them with the very authority which had rendered those titles too holy, too awful for them?

The worth, the purity of faith, the exemplary conduct, and the eminent services to the Christian cause, which distinguished many of these, has rendered their writings only more liable to be so

[z] Ambrose cited by Amalarius de Offic. &c. lib. ii. c. 13. and by Bingham, Eccles. Antiq. b. ii. c. 11.

abused. They are the fathers of the Church; and we feel that we owe them a filial reverence. From their faithful custody we have received, not only the unrecorded usages of the apostolic Church, but the recorded messages of apostles and prophets, and of the Lord himself. What wonder, if in our weakness and folly, nay rather say, in our holy zeal, we, like them of Lystra[a], are fain to pay them a homage that is sinful? But what, can we suppose, would be the language of those very persons, could they now rise from the dead, and address their spiritual children? When they beheld them ascribing that authority to their words which belongs to holy writ alone, would they not exclaim, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also were men of like passions with you, and have preached unto you, in these our writings, that ye should turn from all such idol vanities, to serve the living God."

And loudest would the fathers of our own Church be in lifting up their voice to testify and to disclaim the impious homage. They do speak to us from their graves. The story of our Church's martyrs tells us that they died, not to maintain

[a] Acts xiv.

and perpetuate any authority of their own, but to establish the sole supremacy of Scripture—to bequeath to us, as an inheritance for ever, the Bible in our mother tongue; the spirit to search out its meaning; and the right to appeal for the purity of our faith from the word of man to the word of God.

APPENDIX.

Note to page 19.

WHATEVER may be the exact date of St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, there can be no doubt that it was written not long before his death; because he speaks in it of his departure being at hand[a], without there being any circumstances about the declaration to qualify his words, as in the case of his expressions to the elders of Ephesus.

The fulfilment of these expressions, and the prophetical character of them, has, nevertheless, been maintained by some, on the ground that we have no Scriptural account of Paul being afterwards actually at Ephesus, or in personal intercourse with the Ephesian elders. This, however, is not decisive. It may be impossible to prove such a negative, as that the words were not fulfilled to the letter; but certainly they do not seem to have been fulfilled in spirit. The natural impression of St. Luke's narrative is, that both parties were looking forward to Paul's fate at Jerusalem as the crisis which in-

[a] Chap. iv. 5, 7.

volved their final separation; and took leave of each other accordingly, not as if the apostle were yet for many years to continue his course—to be accessible—even to return to the very spot where they then were[b]; but, as if he were about to be removed altogether from the scene of his labours. His mention of his own "departing" is plainly made in this spirit. When we read in Scripture, therefore, of his subsequent release from Jewish persecution, his return to his apostolical duties, and his being actually in this very place Miletus; this is surely strong ground for questioning the fulfilment, and consequently the prophetical character, of his forebodings. Nay, the words themselves, if we consider them attentively, apply, it would rather seem—not to the Ephesian elders alone—but to *all* in those parts among whom he had been preaching in his apostolic journeys; "I know that *ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take *you* to record, &c."

The fact, that the record itself of these words is so left as to admit of question at least, whether it represents Paul as prophesying, affords, under these circumstances, a presumption that it was *not* designed so to represent him. He is said, in the first instance, to have disavowed all inspired knowledge of impending evil, beyond the "bonds and affliction" which *others* had been inspired to declare in general terms. Was not this disavowal sufficient to

[b] Miletus and Ephesus were only 50 miles apart.

make those addressed, and ourselves, look on the anticipations in which he afterwards indulges, as the suggestion of his own mind—the inference he naturally drew from the circumstances in which he found himself, combined with the vague but gloomy hints of the Spirit? Ought we to contend for the inspired character of words so uttered, even at the risk of having their fulfilment questioned or denied?

THE END.

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